Lower Limestone Coast Water Allocation Plan
Stakeholder Advisory Group
Minutes

Meeting No. 4, 11 July 2024, 10:30 – 3:30 pm

Chardonnay Lodge, Coonawarra

Objectives

- Revisit consumptive pools, management zones, authorisations and classes for the prescribed wells area.
- Get some key areas and key words to allow development of an initial set of guiding principles for the revised Plan (deferred from Meeting No. 3).
- Consider how sustainable allocation is a groundwater management approach.
- Start talking about acceptable impact.
- Provide an update on the groundwater modelling.
- Discuss the August broader consultations.

Attendees:

Group Attendees – Penny Schulz (Chair), Pete Bissell (Chair), Alan Rossouw, Belinda Williamson, Claire Harding, Claire Davies, Graeme Hamilton, Kerry DeGaris, Kylie Boston, Peter Balnaves, Terry Buckley, Wayne Hancock, Melissa Herpich, Darren Shelden.

Staff Attendees – Liz Perkins, Chelsea Burns, Ryan Judd.

Apologies – James Prescott, Simon Sheriff, Sue Botting.

Welcome and agenda

The Chair welcomed everyone and thanked Group members and staff for their attendance and gave an acknowledgement of country.

Minutes

Transparency of the minutes were discussed at length. Members agreed a disclaimer should be added and minutes were then confirmed.
Minutes from Meeting 3 were confirmed as true and correct.
Moved by: Wayne Hancock Seconded by: Graeme Hamilton. All were in favour.

Revisit of Meeting 3 - Consumptive pools, management zones, authorisations, classes

Liz Perkins provided an overview of the key outcomes from discussions at Meeting 3 and proposals for the Lower Limestone Coast Prescribed Wells Area.

Discussion:

Consumptive Pools

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- Managed aquifer recharge consumptive pool
    - Discussion around whether a separate consumptive pool is needed or whether it could it be included in the unconfined aquifer consumptive pool. Will having it as its own consumptive pool make the Plan more complicated than is necessary. Having it in the unconfined consumptive pool would mean allocation could regularly change which could create confusion and be more administratively complex.
    - Discussion around managed aquifer recharge could having unintended consequences and therefore should it be allowed in the Plan. Rules under which it could occur would need to be carefully worked through and perverse outcomes considered before finalising inclusion.
    - Discussion that broader consultation can be used to test the public's perception of ownership of surface water and drain water and should people be able to get a personal benefit from it by using managed aquifer recharge to get a credit for it.
    - Managed aquifer recharge title an issue, discussion around changing to storage.
- Significant environmental asset gain/benefit pool
    - Further discussion around what this could be extracted for. It is proposed to be for extractable licences.
    - Environmental assets still need to be protected through managing water sustainably in the unconfined aquifer
    - Need to make it clear in the title that this is for an extractable licence. More discussion around appropriate name, more discussion still needed to get the right name (strategic environmental water reserve? Natural asset emergency reserve).
    - Discussion around whether these licences would be exempt from the hydrogeological assessment. These are the rules that would need to be worked through.
- First Nations
    - Concern around how much water this could add to extractable licences already in the region. Discussion around what uses this water could be applied to. Could it be just for cultural water use or could it include economic benefit. Could economic benefit sit within the unconfined or confined aquifer with other licence holders. Should have different policy setting around cultural use and economic benefit.
    - If for economic benefit it should then be subject to the same rules as everyone else.
    - Opportunity to provide leadership in the cultural water space and how to do it well for both First Nations and protection of the resource.
    - Discussion round whether it does need to be a separate consumptive pool or can it be included in the unconfined aquifer consumptive pool. Separate would assist with recognition and helping First Nations people see where they fit within the plan.
- Stock and Domestic
    - Support at this stage for this to have its own consumptive pool.
- It was queried whether there is a way that we can determine how many holding water licences can never be activated as they won't ever pass the hydrogeological assessment. At this stage thought that this is probably unlikely given the decisions/assumptions that would have to be made to inform the hydrogeological assessments.

Management Zones

- Discussion that the current management zones are working and there are risks to changing but still an appetite to look at amalgamating some zones, in particular the smaller zones.

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- Proposed amalgamations of management zones in the upper part of the prescribed wells area were discussed and are mostly viewed as favourable changes. But potential negative impacts on the resource of these amalgamations still needs further investigation.
- Issues were discussed around amalgamating the zones in the south (Donovans, Glenburnie, Myora and then Blanche Central, Moorak and Compton).
- Concerns were raised around amalgamation causing hot spot issues by allowing more irrigation to move in to areas or concentrating irrigation further in particular areas.
- Growth of rural living around the Mount Gambier should be considered as to whether this is growth in stock and domestic wells or increases in public water supply or both.

Classes

- Discussion around where mining would sit as currently there are no mining allocations. Discussion that mining and industrial licences are different and that mining cannot use an industrial water licence and also have a higher level of security compared to other industries. Mining should be in the proposed class 3.
- Any new mining licences need to be classed as mining under the new Plan.

Guiding Principles for the revised Plan

Liz Perkins facilitated a session to support the development of an initial set of guiding principles for the revised Plan.

Discussion:

The following areas should be included as guiding principles:

  - Protect the resource/managing within resource condition limits
  - Intergenerational equity
  - Ecological health of natural environments
  - Equitable treatment of water users
  - Social outcomes
  - Current and future users
  - Protect public water supply
  - Water quality and sea water intrusion
  - Long term viability of the resource/water security/water quantity
  - Water market – if quantity is correct
  - Economic or productive use of water
  - Climate variability
  - Climate change
- If guiding principle is to provide a sustainable resource for future generations then climate change needs to be considered. Need to revisit climate change projections once updated.
- Discussion of whether guiding principles can be simplified so they are fewer, potentially some duplicates.
- Discussion that efficient water use can be lower priority as a guiding principle – members not sure it is a guiding principle and will occur naturally as technology improves and water becomes more scarce/valuable, or it becomes more expensive to pump water. Not sure it needs to be included in the guiding principles of the Plan. Efficiency is also open to personal interpretation. Can mean something very different to different people.

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Modelling update

Liz Perkins provided an update on progress of groundwater modelling being developed by the Department for Environment and Water.

Discussion:

- There was discussion around some initial scenarios that might be needed.
- Reasonable support for scenarios of full allocation extracted and RCP4.5 climate change scenario and current average extraction and RCP4.5 climate change scenario.
- A scenario of full allocation and current climate was discussed to understand the impact of allocation without applying a climate change scenario. Low levels of support for full allocation scenarios. Very hard to get 100% extraction, the highest extraction we should do is 90%.
- The scenarios published with the models aren't realistic, need to determine more realistic scenarios to inform the process moving forward.
- It was discussed that there is a need to determine acceptable impacts before running scenarios. This will allow informed decision making around what the scenarios show.
- It was discussed what scenarios might demonstrate a stabilisation of groundwater levels across the region or an increasing trend.
- Further discussion is still needed around the outputs (outputs above the graphs produced for each observation well) that will be useful from scenario runs. As an example a map for the region indicating what trends observation wells show from the scenario run, similar to resource condition trend reports. It was discussed that for the observation well graphs having the scenarios on one graph is useful for comparison.

Ewens Ponds

Claire Harding provided an update on the current situation at Ewens Ponds.

Sustainable allocation introduction

Liz Perkins provided an introduction to sustainable allocation and acceptable impact as a groundwater management approach.

Discussion:

- Example of how acceptable impact could be considered for Public water supply – does protection of this (guiding principles) mean no impact?
    - Quality of water needs consideration and likely a bigger issue than quantity.
    - Discussion that this critical human need should not be impacted. Needs guaranteed ongoing security.

Next meeting date

- Next meeting date: Wednesday 11 September 2024 10.30 am – 3.30 pm at Chardonnay Lodge, Coonawarra

Close of meeting

Meeting closed at 3:45 pm
The Chair thanked the stakeholders and staff for attending.

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Lower Limestone Coast WAP Stakeholder Advisory Group
Action Table

Action	LLC WAP Stakeholder Advisory Group Actions	Status	Meeting 3 Update
1.1	LC Landscape Board to provide the Group updates on outcomes from the Limestone Coast Water Steering Committee.	Ongoing	Update from meeting on meeting May 22 was provided.
2.1	Request from Group for extraction and allocation for each management area + holding licences info.	Ongoing	For Meeting 4
2.1	Provide the Group terms of reference for Limestone Coast Water Steering Committee	Ongoing	Terms of reference were updated at May 22 meeting and not yet endorsed by committee.
3.1	LC Landscape Board to analyse potential amalgamations and provide back to the Group.	Ongoing	
3.2	Move forward with same management zones as current for now.	Ongoing	
3.3	Revisit management zones as adaptive management and sustainable allocation are considered.	Ongoing	
3.4	Understand the impact of SPR and DS if class 3 and 4 were merged to look at moving forward with 3 classes as a starting point.	Ongoing	
3.5	Allocation and use data to be presented spatially in addition to the table.	Ongoing	
4.1	Run two scenarios: full allocation extracted with RCP4.5 climate change scenario and current average extraction with RCP4.5 climate change scenario.	Ongoing	

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Action Table – Closed Items

Action	LLC WAP Stakeholder Advisory Group Actions	Status
1.2	LC Landscape Board staff to take the option of proxies in the terms of reference to the LC Landscape Board Governing Body.	Complete
1.3	LC Landscape Board staff to provide an overview of the monitoring network at Meeting 2.	Complete

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