Lower Limestone Coast Water Allocation Plan
Stakeholder Advisory Group
Minutes

Meeting No. 5, 18 September 2024, 10:30 – 3:30 pm

The Henty, Mount Gambier

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Objectives

- Discuss what was heard during the August consultation sessions.
- Detailed overview of the outputs from the two subregional groundwater models.
- Start discussion on a process to work through acceptable impact.
- Start discussion on a process to work through adaptive management.
- Provide an update on progress of the water market study. (delayed to Meeting 6)

Attendees:

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

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

Apologies – James Prescott, Pete Bissell.

Welcome and agenda

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

Agenda check

- Members requested an opportunity to discuss some items at the end of the meeting.
- Members requested an opportunity to discuss inclusion of representative from the South Eastern Water Conservation and Drainage Board in Stakeholder Advisory Group meeting.
- Members requested that the Group revisit guiding principles for the revised water allocation plan to provide a framework to inform discussions. Some members didn't think that enough time had been spent on this in meeting 3. It was also noted that this was supposed to be revisited in the following meeting but wasn't. This was added as an action for Meeting 6.
- The Group requested an update on First Nations engagement at a future meeting and an opportunity to meet with the South East Aboriginal Focus Group.

Minutes

Minutes from Meeting 4 were confirmed as true and correct.
Moved by: Peter Balnaves. Seconded by: Claire Davies. All were in favour.

Wider community consultation

Liz Perkins provided an overview of the feedback and key outcomes of the wider community consultation and next steps.

Discussion:

- Group members that attended community consultation sessions raised that the community did not seem interested in proposed changes to management zones. They also noted that the concerns raised at the sessions they attended were similar to the discussion points raised by the Group. It was also raised that consultation and issues raised in meetings without solutions could cause angst within the community. It was discussed that the approach is to engage early and often, informing along the way rather than only at the end when decisions are already made. This is the appropriate method to ensure people understand the changes although it can cause angst/anxiety around the issues early on.
- It was queried if there is opportunity for people to engage outside of the community consultation sessions if they missed them or were unaware sessions were on. The project page provides details on the proposed changes and some simple ways to contribute. A summary from the sessions and the presentation will also be made publicly available.
- Climate change came up a lot during the sessions and there are a broad range of views on climate change.
- It was asked whether in the sessions there had been interest around the environment and groundwater dependent ecosystems. Sessions certainly had more attendance from industry and water licence holders but there was strong interest in some sessions.
- It was raised whether further engagement/education is needed for some areas that seemed to think that everything is fine and there are no issues with the resource or the current Plan. It was discussed that it is normal for people to have a strong personal interest/focus and there is still more to do to get people to think from a community perspective rather than at their own personal interest. But businesses/people are currently under economic pressure which makes it hard for people to be able to think at a higher level than their own personal interest.
- It was raised that irrigators have an idea that there are issues with the resource but the general community likely have a lower level of understanding.
- There was a discussion around managed aquifer recharge should be considered within the Plan for both public and private benefit. There was uncertainty around managed aquifer recharge and what this may look like in the plan. There should not be credits for people that are using drainage bores or for water that would have ended up in the aquifer anyway. This needs to be explained better at the next community sessions for how this may work.
- Environmental water needs to be explained better for the community and difference between groundwater needing to be able to support and maintain groundwater dependent ecosystems and pumping water to groundwater dependent ecosystems for emergency. Water allocated to be pumped to groundwater dependent ecosystems should be called something different such as 'natural resource management water' so that it is clear that it is different. The Group have discussed the name a few times but still need to confirm preferred name.
- Discussion around management of drains and whether this could result in credits. Raised that rather than a credit, the benefit to users and the resource is improving water resource management and the health of the resource which will therefore combat the need for reductions/restrictions to allocation.
- It was discussed if there was an accepted position for public water supply to have the Class 1 and be protected from reductions/restrictions. There seemed mostly support and acceptance. There was more discussion around Class 2 and whether industrial should be protected from reductions/restrictions when other industries are not.

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- It was discussed how we can better inform the community on drains and impact of drains on the groundwater resource. Acknowledge that it isn't the magic solution to groundwater management challenges.
- It was requested that it be minuted that some members of the Group would like to include drains but this is considered out of scope as the drains are under a different legislation and managed by a different entity. This is why it is not being pursued further in relation to the amendment.
- The group discussed whether it had recommendations for the LC Landscape Board Governing Body around drains such as having the impacts and benefits and limitations of the drainage network quantified, that the Landscape SA Act and the South Eastern Water Conservation and Drainage Act are combined and the two boards are amalgamated. There was not consensus from the group to make these recommendations at this meeting.
- The group would like a session on drains, the joint board meetings, committees and how they are working together/what projects are currently underway with both boards involved.

Overview of groundwater model outputs

Sue Botting provided an overview of the outputs from the subregional groundwater models.

Discussion:

- It was raised that given that this will be a 10 year plan, how far into the future do we try to pitch the management of the resource. Does the timeframe matter if we have adaptive management and the correct levers in place?
- Groundwater models need to be calibrated. Was discussed that the models will only need to be recalibrated when being used, for example when reviews occur.
- The models can be used to determine areas that are more susceptible to climate change.
- Will the plan use water level decline and groundwater salinity as triggers? Both of these could be used for triggers. The groundwater models only produce water level outputs.
- It was pointed out that they have low confidence in some parameters used in the model such as transmissivity and underground flow paths/channels in the limestone.
- It was raised that there should be triggers included in the plan to revisit/recalibrate the models. This is possible, could be an action on a resource condition limit that triggers a review of the Plan and an update of the models.
- It was asked whether the South Coast model will be sufficient to help determine management actions for high value wetlands such as Pic Ponds and Ewens Ponds. Pic Ponds is a complicated system to model and Ewens and Pic Ponds may be too fine scale for the South Coast model. However one of the model outputs is discharge rates. The discharge rates required to maintain a clear water state for these sites is well understood.
- It was suggested that a model output similar to figure 6.4 in the model report would be a useful model output.
- Maximum allocation being used is not a realistic scenario. 85-90% is more realistic.
- We have so much more data this time in comparison to previous plan so plan must be better. Next plan will be better again as there will be better data and science available.

Acceptable Impact

Sue Botting facilitated a session to discuss a process for looking at acceptable impacts with a focus on the Management zone of Monbulla as an example.

Discussion:

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- Where does sites of international significance fit such as RAMSAR site and Naracoorte Caves, could this be considered for acceptable impact. State and National obligations could certainly be considered for acceptable impact.
- Iron bacteria should be included for stock and domestic.
- Declining groundwater will impact forestry productivity. Groundwater level change needs to be accounted for with forestry as if groundwater levels have declined then the trees are no longer using as much water. Water quality such as salinity will also impact forestry productivity as they will not use groundwater once it exceeds 3,000 ppm and then the trees will rely only on rainfall.
- Dairy - ideally water quality less than 1000 ppm. Yield concern as it will increase pumping cost if this is reduced.
- Viticulture – groundwater level decline very important as quality generally declines the deeper you go. 1400 ppm generally the threshold for vines.
- Environment – groundwater decline and nutrients major concerns. Hydraulic gradient for through flow.
- Dependent ecosystems – discussed around how will the ones being protected/maintained and the ones that can't be saved be decided.
- Monbulla – a plantation under clay wells road has been converted from forestry to pasture. Allocation change for softwood was hardwood that has been converted to softwood. In Monbulla drains could affecting groundwater dependent ecosystems.

Introduction to adaptive management

Sue Botting facilitated a short session to introduce a process for exploring an adaptive management framework for the Plan.

Discussion:

- It was discussed how the model scenarios are needed or inform and adaptive management framework.
- It was discussed what context needs to be provided and whether adaptive management is a solution for both reductions and restrictions. Adaptive management can have triggers that introduce restrictions to allocations but also then return allocations.
- It was asked what does adaptive management impact, use or allocation. Adaptive management could trigger changes to allocation but for it to be effective (contribute to improvement of resource condition) this needs to impact use. If allocation is much greater that use it may not be effective.

Other business

Discussion:

- Due to four year timeline of the plan amendment, we need key discussion points/outcomes of each meeting so that we can recall what has been said and been covered.
- Can all sectors/industries allow the process to take place rather than lobbying the media and politicians. We as a group need to united and work through the process then once the draft plan is ready for consultation then can advocate for their interests/sectors.

Next meeting date

- Next meeting date: Thursday 17 October 2024.

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Close of meeting

Meeting closed at 3.35 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 5 Update
1.1	LC Landscape Board to provide the Group updates on outcomes from the Limestone Coast Water Steering Committee.	Ongoing	Nil.
2.1	Provide the Group terms of reference for Limestone Coast Water Steering Committee	Complete	Terms of reference have been endorsed and will be provided to the group via the project page.
3.1	LC Landscape Board to analyse potential amalgamations and provide back to the Group.	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	
5.1	Revisit guiding principles for the Plan in Meeting 6.	Ongoing	
5.2	Organised for the Group to meet with the South East Aboriginal Focus Group.	Ongoing	
5.3	Have a session on the drains to provide members more information.		

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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
2.1	Request from Group for extraction and allocation for each management area + holding licences info.	Complete
3.2	Move forward with same management zones as current for now.	Complete

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