Lower Limestone Coast WAP Stakeholder Advisory Group
Minutes

Meeting No. 1, 27 March 2024, 10:30 am – 3:30 pm
Chardonnay Lodge, Coonawarra

Attendees

Attendees: Penny Schulz (Chair), Pete Bissell (Co-Chair), Melissa Herpich, Belinda Williamson, Claire Harding, Claire Davies, Darren Shelden, Kerry DeGaris, Terry Buckley, Alan Rossouw, Graeme Hamilton, Kylie Boston, Simon Sherriff (arrived at 12 noon due to flight delay).

LC Landscape Board Staff: Sue Botting, Liz Perkins, Ryan Judd, Chelsea Burns.

Apologies: James Prescott, Wayne Hancock, Peter Balnaves.

Welcome and agenda

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

Discussion around agenda:

- What other parties will have input into the process to revise the Plan? There will be broader consultation and the relevant sections within the Department for Environment and Water (DEW Policy, Science, and Licensing) will support the process as required. In addition there is a Limestone Coast Water Steering Committee. Membership includes Managers and Board Members from the LC Landscape Board and Directors from DEW and PIRSA.
- Some discussion around how this part of the process worked last time. There were people in the background that proposed changes for the Group to consider, this worked well except changes were made at the end that the Group didn't agree with.
- It was noted the change in structure since the last process with the LC Landscape Board no longer in the Department but arm's length from Government. This will not be a barrier to access information or data needed but provides independence.
- The Group are putting themselves out there and their reputations on the line through their involvement in the process. The Group needs to be presented or have access to all the information and comfortable with the detail of information that they are providing input into. The Group needs to understand all the information provided so that they can explain it to their industries and community. The Group also needs be honest and transparent during the process.
- Does the timing of the next election create a risk to the process? Political processes can be disruptive, LC Landscape Board will work closely with Government to try to mitigate these risks.

Action outcomes to note

- LC Landscape Board Staff to provide the Group updates from the Limestone Coast Water Steering Committee relevant to amendment of Lower Limestone Coast Water Allocation Plan.

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Amendment process and timelines

Liz Perkins provided an overview of the policy revision and policy development process.

Discussion:

- Adaptability should be reflected in the process principles, came through in the review. Adaptability to be added.
- The Group need to be able to raise knowledge gaps and understand if these gaps can be filled. If they cannot be filled then they will be acknowledged.
- Is there an ability to read more or all of the bores in Waterconnect as part of the process? Need to understand what benefits this would have and many bores it would now not be possible to take readings from.
- Current data should be added to principles. Group would like to understand number of wells being monitored in the Lower Limestone Coast and where they are. Will be revisited in Meeting 2 with relevant maps. Can show bores that have or have had data loggers that provide continuous measures of groundwater level over time. Is there sufficient monitoring to provide the best available science and support the modelling? Question to be deferred to Meeting 2.
- Some discussion around the science forestry have been reviewing in relation to the deemed rate and what will be done with it. At this stage the work hasn't been provided fully to DEW or the LC Landscape Board. We are best placed to wait until that occurs rather than pre-emptively discuss. Will be discussed in detail at a later meeting once we have all the information and forestry's updated work and it will be open for discussion as a group.
- Selective use of data raised as an issue. Data needs to be used with integrity.
- Political influence and upcoming election raised. Need to be clear where this process with Group lands and differentiate to where politics may intervene.
- If Group members are contacted by the media for comment, they cannot comment on behalf of the Group unless approved by the LC Landscape Board. Some Group members are common contacts for media and are not prevented from commenting on other matters outside of the Group process.
- Group members are not only contacted by media but also members of the community in relation to the amendment process. Group members should listen to feedback from community and then pass this onto the Group and LC Landscape Board Staff.
- Board needs to manage public perception of Group members as an industry rep and perception that some decisions made may not be supporting the best interest of the industry. Board needs to have conversations with other industry reps and not just rely on the Group for the industry perspective.
- Issue raised that dryland farmers are not represented and we need to try engage these stakeholders so that they are involved in the process as it will and has impacted them.
- Succession planning and documentation raised due to the length of the amendment process and the risks associated with this.

Terms of reference

Liz Perkins provided overview of the current terms of reference.

Discussion:

- It was discussed who Group members represent, their industry or their own expertise. Group members bring their own individual knowledge but also knowledge of their wider industry.

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But it is recognised that broader consultation is needed to ensure alternate perspectives from within industries contribute to the process.

- Given length of process proxy members raised as a need to re-consider. This query will be referred back to the LC Landscape Board Governing Body.
- Terms of reference updated as per track changes pending decision around proxy members

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Scope of the amendment focus areas

Sue Botting provided an overview of the key focus areas of the amendment process as resolved by the LC Landscape Board Governing Body.

Discussion:

- Regional model domain boundary – how has this been determined? Question deferred to Meeting 2.
- Can other scenarios be run? As a standard the worst case and best case scenarios are run but we will determine with input from the Group other scenarios to run. Scenarios are time consuming, need to determine what is necessary and relevant, what scenarios answer our questions. Scenarios book ended with best and worst case scenarios – need the model to determine what can be sustained, acceptable impact and what the ramifications for decisions (levels of allocation and extraction).
- Climate change impacts vary across the region, how is this considered in the models? Dairy research suggests climate variation reduces towards the south coast, how is this taken in to account in the modelling? Questions deferred to Meeting 2.
- How is land use and land use change considered in the model e.g. Bool Lagoon and change from grazing to cropping? Question deferred to Meeting 2.
- How do the sub-regional models talk to the regional model? Question deferred to Meeting 2.
- Can the models work backwards, to model what is needs to look like for sustainable allocation? Question deferred to Meeting 2.
- What format are the models in to look at? Technical reports for the models are publically available online. Copies will be provided to the Group.
- Discussion around possibility of partial unbundling, some Group members not aware that this was possible and thought fully unbundled plan was the only option.
- Unbundling and forestry not having an entitlement – is this being reviewed? This was raised in the recent review of the *Landscape South Australia Act 2019*. LC Landscape Board Staff to follow up on where this is at and report back to the Group.
- Environmental provisions- will the provisions in the current plan be assessed. Have they been effective in protection of environmental assets (such as Bool Lagoon)? Add to supporting work.

Water market

Liz Perkins provided an overview of the current and planned water market research to assist with the amendment process.

Discussion:

- Water market needs to be developed once the total pool is determined as there is risk of speculation and making buy-backs and reducing water licensees more difficult.
- Will this set the value of water? Can this value be relatively consistent?
- What is the minimum scale of the market to make it worthwhile? Size of the market important. Looked at in context of availability, policy and administration.
- Environmental water needs to be considered in the market. Environment doesn't tend to fair well where it doesn't have an allocation. How will environment be recognised in a market? Any global examples?

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- How does the water market account for local sensitive areas such as GDEs or Public Water Supply? How can a water market be used to protect these?
- How do you protect the water market from speculators or investors that are happy to sit on water until they can hold water users to ransom that want to use it?
- Water is valuable – if industries/individual businesses collapse then they can rely on water to survive due to the value of it. Water itself as an asset or the value of the use?
- Can restrictions be placed on who can buy into the market? What restrictions to trade are possible?
- Need to be able to trade and transfer water between users. But those who sit on water as an asset is detrimental. Spot pricing in electricity market an example of a market we don't want.
- Water is gradually moving to where land, water quality and infrastructure meets. Hydro test has been a limiting factor. Shepparton example of what to avoid or lessons.
- Almonds being grown on the river instead of grapes example of impact of water market.
- Can the consultant come and talk to the group and industries, banks, water traders? Scope of project will include coming back to the Group.
- Limitations of what a water market can do and operate within the National Water Initiative.
- Identifying differences between the surface water and ground water markets.

Supporting work – planned and underway

Sue Botting provided an overview of the current and planned supporting work to assist with the amendment process.

Discussion:

- Geospatial work to look at land use, look at change over time.
- Not seeking to licence stock and domestic through this process at this time.
- Intensification of stock and domestic wells and dams in the area around townships – area might need to be a focus for study around stock and domestic.
- SA Water are in discussions with Local Government around Blue Lake Protection Zone and stock and domestic use and waste water.
- Proposed model of the Blue Lake would encompass the catchment area of the Blue Lake and may be able to be used to assess impacts of land use change such as rural living developments.
- Stock and domestic issues – people using stock and domestic for recreational uses such as filling dams, consideration for study
- Noted that some people had had to deepen their stock and domestic bores.
- Wetland condition assessments – where were they? The 13 priority wetlands and same consultants to redo it. Can we expand wetland types? To have better representation and diversity.
- Can you do wetland assessments on year by year basis or break up wet and dry years/periods rather than a 10 year period? This may help determine if wetlands can be maintained if we maintain average rainfall rather than a declining rainfall.
- Will the monitoring network be reviewed to ensure it is suitable?
- What role does tourism have in future water demand – Blue Lake, Valley Lake, Ewens, Pic Ponds, Little Blue, Kilsby sinkhole etc. National Parks & Wildlife Service have estimates of economic contribution of their sites and visitation is increasing.

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Resource condition update

Sue Botting provided an update of resource condition and latest monitoring data.

Discussion:

- How do the declines fare compare to the current acceptable impact of the Plan? ~30% of observation wells failed the Plan's resource condition trigger as water levels declined by more than 0.1m a year over a period of 5 years, on average.
- Discussion around use and extraction maps and areas that have high amounts of unused water and the economic contribution of dryland farming.
- Caroline demonstrates change in land use and compounding impacts of forestry and irrigation. Stringybark cleared for forestry plantation and then irrigation developed around 1999.
- Joanna discussion around the declines experienced and the significance of these for GDEs and users even though 2m decline may not seem as significant in comparison to other areas.

Preparation for next meeting – Groundwater and climate modelling

Sue Botting provided an overview of the next meeting.

Discussion:

- Can group members email questions about the models once they have read reports or had time to think? The Group can email questions through as they think of them.
- The Group requested a summary of the assumptions included in the model.
- Can we look at the water monitoring at the start of the next meeting prior to the modelling discussions? This will be added to the start of the next meeting.
- Why are there three management areas over Bool Lagoon? Not known, historical but we can look into.
- Question for Meeting 2 - While other regions and areas have experienced declining annual rainfall, Mount Gambier has stayed very consistent – how has that been reflected in the projections?
- Timeframe of models – 2049 isn't even a full forestry rotation.
- Discussion around climate change projections – NARCliM 1.5 to 2.0 and discussions with DEW on the complexities and implications of the change in these projections.

Other Business

- Anecdotal claims that groundwater has not changed and has always been where it is around Manga Road – Glenroy Plains. MON035 appears to be closest well.

Close of meeting

Meeting closed at 3:30 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 1 Update
1.1	LC Landscape Board to provide the Group updates on outcomes from the Limestone Coast Water Steering Committee.	ongoing	N/A
1.2	LC Landscape Board staff to take the option of proxies in the terms of reference to the LC Landscape Board Governing Body.	Will occur on 2 May 2024	N/A
1.3	LC Landscape Board staff to provide an overview of the monitoring network at Meeting 2.	Will occur 1 May 2024	N/A

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