Lower Limestone Coast Water Allocation Plan
Stakeholder Advisory Group
Minutes

Meeting No. 11, 17 December 2025, 11:00 – 4:00 pm

Chardonnay Lodge, Coonawarra

Objectives

- Continue to work through acceptable impact.
- Consider approach for setting resource condition limits for wetlands and groundwater dependent ecosystems.
- Revisit outstanding actions, guiding principles for the revised Plan and introduce objectives.
- Check in on the amendment process timeline and status of progress on key concepts.

Attendees:

Group Attendees – Dr Penny Schulz (Chair), Pete Bissell, Alan Rossouw, Claire Harding, Darren Shelden (MS Teams – left meeting at 3pm), Graeme Hamilton, Kerry DeGaris, Kylie Boston, Melissa Herpich, Simon Sherriff, Terry Buckley.

LC Landscape Board Staff Attendees – Steve Bourne, Liz Perkins, Sue Botting, Chelsea Burns, Ryan Judd.

Apologies – Belinda Williamson, Peter Balnaves, Claire Davies, Wayne Hancock.

Welcome and agenda

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

Agenda check and minutes

The following corrections to the Meeting 10 Minutes were requested:

- Page 4, first dot point under the discussion, add "some" before group members as this dot point was not the consensus of the group.
- Page 4, discussion under acceptable impact. It should be added at the first dot point that the discussion couldn't identify a groundwater level beyond which the impacts would be unacceptable to primary production and industry. It was considered that it wasn't a one size fits all situation. There was some acknowledgement that loss of shallow groundwater under primary production would have an impact.

Minutes from Meeting 10 were confirmed as true and correct with the above amendments.

Moved by: Terry Buckley. Seconded by: Kerry DeGaris. All were in favour.

CONFIRMED

Public water supply

Simon Sherriff, Manager Regional Water Security, presented on SA Water security strategy and public water supply. Liz Perkins presented the proposed approach for acceptable impact for public water supply.

Discussion:

- As a public water supplier, SA Water are highly regulated via ESCOSA's 4-yearly business planning cycle, which can make it challenging to respond to sudden and/or unforeseen changes in source water availability.
- Question raised on 'the bar' for having something approved by ESCOSA? ESCOSA process and criteria is comprehensive. SA Water needs to demonstrate prudent investment. Input from DEW and Landscape Boards is also needed to make it clear that a water resource is at an absolute critical point if SA Water want to implement an alternative water resource, e.g. recent example with stressed groundwater resource and new desalination plant on Eyre Peninsula.
    - Link to ESCOSA process and criteria was provided after the meeting for supporting information purposes.
- It was noted that outside of the SA Water wastewater systems, local councils have a significant responsibility in that they manage Community Wastewater Management Systems (CWMS) across the Lower Limestone Coast.
- Question raised regarding the water security risk surveillance that SA Water undertake - how does SA Water manage each of the focus areas, as sometimes things can change quite quickly? SA Water uses an internal risk matrix with likelihood and consequence scoring for each focus area. It is reviewed regularly.
- It was queried around the Millenium drought and what the 'water security response level' would have been at the time? Current Eyre Peninsula Water Security Response Level 2 referred to here, but specific Millenium Drought question taken on notice. This may have been a different framework to what is used now, but it is likely there are similarities.
    - Link to the Eyre Peninsula Water Security Response Level 2 provided after the meeting for supporting information purposes.
- How much growth does SA Water expect in the future for Mount Gambier and the surrounding area? Question was taken on notice. SA Water are working on a 50-year water security strategy to inform this. Different stakeholders have different estimates on how much growth there will be and how quickly this growth will occur. SA Water work closely with the Department of Housing and Urban Development (DHUD) to ensure growth rate estimates and growth location assumptions are reasonable.
- What does 'semi-confined' mean regarding Millicent's public water supply? SA Water's Millicent borefield extracts from below a localised confining layer that is present between sublayers of the regional unconfined aquifer in this specific area.
- It was discussed that while SA Water customers are a majority of the population in the region (within towns and Mount Gambier), a significant part of the population accesses domestic water via stock and domestic bores and rainwater tanks. Access to water via stock and domestic bores for those that do not have access to SA Water/public water supply is an additional consideration.
- It was queried what the plans might be for the Fingerpoint Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) noting this infrastructure is ageing? There is planning happening – Question taken on notice, for a more detailed update.

CONFIRMED

- It was queried if there was opportunity for treated wastewater to be used for irrigation of agriculture. It is done elsewhere in the State and around Australia and should be a consideration. Some councils are investigating using treated wastewater for other uses.
- There was some discussion around the quality of the confined aquifer around Naracoorte. There had been talk in the community of salinity concerns. Noted by SA Water.
- It was discussed that there is a low level of understanding of public water supply delivery and source. Particularly little is often understood about the uniqueness of the Blue Lake/Warwar and the important processes happening there, with urban stormwater inflow via the aquifer. There is a challenge in managing such a complex natural asset.
- There are various reasons as to why public water supply might be in the unconfined aquifer versus the confined. It could be quality or thickness of the aquifer. Tolerance of each system is different regarding groundwater level decline. May be able to tolerate a small amount of seasonal variation.
- It was discussed what is known about the Blue Lake/Warwar as an environmental asset. There are some things known e.g. fresh water stromatolites. But there is not as much information as you might expect for such an important system. There may be additional protections needed around the Blue Lake/Warwar.

Action follow up and guiding principles

Liz Perkins addressed outstanding items from the action list. A revised guiding principles and proposed objectives were provided to the Group for discussion at a future meeting.

Discussion:

- The Goyder research project has now been completed and the reports are publicly available. More will be done in 2026 to connect stakeholders and community to the research outcomes and outputs.
- The Board is considering with Goyder how to make the key findings of this research project into a more usable format for stakeholders rather than technical reports.
- In relation to the draft guiding principles, it was raised that the hardwood forestry industry appreciates the effort that has gone into incorporating the feedback provided. Guiding principle 6 around adaptive management for forestry is a concern and extremely difficult to undertake in practice. The draft guiding principles and objectives are now available to Group members on their project page for further review. They will then be revisited at a future meeting.
- Proposed to remove action 4.1 due to outdated reference to RCP4.5 under NARCLiM1.5. NARCLiM 2.0 is now available as best available science and it is intended that this will be used for the groundwater models.
- A group member raised that there are opposing views on climate change and impacts in Antarctica. One position is that it is the worst it has been and then another state that there was more ice produced in the last 12 months than has been recorded before. The South Australian Government's position, including in the legislation, is that we will consider climate change in the process. The LC Landscape Board's current approach of considering current climate, not climate projections, initially to consider sustainable allocation is a reasonable approach to climate change. Climate change will be considered to set future resource condition triggers and limits.

Approach to setting resource condition limits for wetlands

CONFIRMED

Sue Botting provided the proposed approach to acceptable impact for setting resource condition limits for wetlands and groundwater dependent ecosystems.

Discussion:

- It was discussed that many stakeholders and community do not understand what a groundwater dependent ecosystem is. We need to try communicating with the community on the definition of a groundwater dependent ecosystem and how these ecosystems interact with groundwater to exist.
- In the development of the current water allocation plan, some Group members only recall discussing the wetlands listed in table 10 and no others.
- The wetlands in table 9, could these be wetlands that are not GDEs and could be perched. Yes, it is possible.
- Did all the 16,000 wetlands need to have native vegetation or flora and fauna in them to be considered as a wetland. No, these were considered wetlands if they held water.
- It was stated that from a LC Landscape Board perspective we are not planning on going back to the past and attempting to return lost wetlands but documenting the loss of wetlands and recognise this is very important. We will then look at what can be protected and maintained going forward into the future.
- It was queried how is it known whether a groundwater dependent ecosystem is disconnected and losing when you can't see that. It is determined by the distance of groundwater levels to wetland bed/base of the wetland.
- It was queried what are the timelines on this groundwater dependent ecosystem acceptable impact approach, it looks to be a lot of work. It is a lot of work, but it can be done in the time needed.
- Will it be considered whether other things such as new drains may have impacted on these wetlands. This can be considered. The SEWCDB, as part of their legislated remit, consider conservation when assessing drain applications.
- It was queried what are the cut off for groundwater levels for what is considered a groundwater dependent ecosystem. It is to do with the relationship between surface and groundwater from the Cranswick and Herpich work. Generic regional approach is interaction occurs to 3m under the bed. But ultimately this will vary, some will interact at shallow depths and others at much lower depths.
- Bool Lagoon management options have changed since ecological character descriptions were written. Future management approach to be discussed with Parks.
- It was raised what are the nutrient levels in Ewens and Pic Ponds and how do they compare. Ewens has higher nitrate levels but is able to manage this better in comparison to Pic Ponds as it has 10 times the flow.
- Can the weir in the Pic Ponds outlet be removed? Pic Ponds has been operating currently at about the lowest level possible without causing other management issues such as erosion and will need to be increased higher to prevent this. It was discussed whether there has been any improvement at Pic Ponds in the last 12 months. There has been some, but it still has a long way to go.
- How quickly does the Pic Ponds system respond to operating the weir. Ponds respond quickly but the wider wetland and peat swamps take longer to respond.
- Is the nutrient balance project different or combined with an acid sulphate soils project? They are separate projects.
- It was queried if a one-page could be created on the wetland methodology.

CONFIRMED

- It was commented that this is the boring part, and the interest is only in what it actually results in.

Acceptable Impact

Liz Perkins revisited acceptable impact and provided further details on how this will be worked through. A hypothetical example at a management area level was talked through.

Discussion:

- It was queried how the resource condition limits are determined, does the LC Landscape Board pick them or does the Group provide recommendations. Neither. The resource condition limits are determined through the methodologies that have been derived from available science and data and are being worked through with the Group. The Group is being given the opportunity to inform the methodologies. Impact on users will be considered and pathways to achieve a resource condition limit will be provided to the Group. Feedback and considerations for the LC Landscape Board can be provided.
- It was raised whether the stock and domestic approach methodology was scientific enough and whether it would stand up in court. The methodology is far more scientific than typically used.

Timeline and topics

Liz Perkins provided an overview of the process timeline as circulated to Group members and status of key concepts as per Action 9.4.

Discussion:

- It was queried whether it has been considered to reduce the policy/simplifying farm forestry. This is a consideration. Historical intent was 10% of a certificate of title but this is not what ended up in the Plan. This will be a Group discussion in 2026.
- It was asked whether in the process are we sufficiently considering simplification of principles for licensing/administration. Multiple changes under consideration address this such as removing components and purposes of use and replacing with a simpler class system.
- The end timeline date was queried. The LC Landscape Board is still working to an end of 2027 for a full draft. This would mean 1 July 2028 would the earliest possible adoption date. Current Plan applies until a new Plan is adopted.
- Will the Group meet more regularly in 2026. Probably not more frequent than every 2 months. It is a balance between allowing work to happen in the background and meeting.

Any other business

Discussion:

- The Group discussed some recent updates and presentation on rare earth mining in the region. There is significant concern across the community about the proposed rare earth mining development.
- There needs to be consideration of the wellbeing of industry/stakeholders affected by this process including once the Plan has been amended. Who is going to engage with industry more closely for grant funding and transition support. Raised with previous Minister and will raise with new Minister/PIRSA. What does assistance look like. Need to start conversation now if proposing to implement 1 July 2028. Was a key in transition to the current Plan and

CONFIRMED

volumetric conversion and have learnings around that. Board is actively pursuing opportunities for funding and opportunities. Industries and businesses will all be impacted differently. Messaging important so it doesn't come as a surprise.

- Considering full allocation, is this something that needs to be done legally? Or was this a decision of the Board. In alignment with the legislation the Board considers the risk of current allocation being fully used. Considering full allocation at current climate is critical to understanding if the resource is over allocated and the risk.
- Reductions and adaptive management options was raised and the need to investigate whether adaptive management can be implemented by forestry. Can this be fleshed out further and taken off the agenda if it's determined that it's not feasible. Some view that reductions seem a simpler approach than adaptive management.
- Equity of implications to industries that don't have lots of unused water e.g. forestry.

Next meeting date

- Next meeting date: Meeting 12 is planned for late February/early March. Date to be set shortly.

Close of meeting

Meeting closed at 4.15 pm
The Chair thanked the stakeholders and staff for attending.

CONFIRMED

LANDSCAPE SOUTH AUSTRALIA LIMESTONE COAST

Lower Limestone Coast WAP Stakeholder Advisory Group
Action Table

Action	LLC WAP Stakeholder Advisory Group Actions	Status	Meeting 11 Update
1.1	LC Landscape Board to provide the Group updates on outcomes from the Limestone Coast Water Steering Committee.	Ongoing	The committee met in July to discuss the Goyder research that has now been delivered and is publicly available.
3.1	LC Landscape Board to analyse potential amalgamations and provide back to the Group.	Ongoing	Intend to come back to this in 2026-27.
3.3	Revisit management zones as adaptive management and sustainable allocation are considered.	Ongoing	Intend to come back to this in 2026-27.
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	Intend to come back to this in 2026-27.
3.5	Allocation and use data to be presented spatially in addition to the table.	Complete	
4.1	Run two scenarios: full allocation extracted with RCP4.5 climate change scenario and current average extraction with RCP4.5 climate change scenario.	Superseded	The climate change scenarios proposed have been superseded by NARCliM 2.0.
5.2	Organise for the Group to meet with the South East Aboriginal Focus Group.	Ongoing	Work is progressing with SEAFG. Action still to occur.
6.2	LC Landscape Board to added glossary of terms on project page.	Ongoing	No update, terms are in draft, need a polish.
9.3	LC Landscape Board to consider implementing resource condition updates during the amendment process.	Ongoing	Still under consideration, earliest we'd look to do is post Autumn 2026 monitoring.
10.1	Request for allocation and use data per management area.	Complete	Provided at Meeting 11.
10.2	LC Landscape Board to review stock and domestic document and consider update to clarify impact to and impact from stock and domestic use.	Complete	Provided at Meeting 11.
10.3	LC Landscape Board to provide a practical example for a management area to better understand how the resource condition limits will work.	Complete	Provided at Meeting 11.

CONFIRMED

Action	LLC WAP Stakeholder Advisory Group Actions	Status	Meeting 11 Update
11.1	Provide a link to Group members to the Goyder research project and a reminder to consider the guiding principles and objectives.		
11.2	Create a "one-page" on the wetland methodology.		

CONFIRMED

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
3.2	Move forward with same management zones as current for now.	Complete
5.1	Revisit guiding principles for the Plan in Meeting 6.	Complete
2.2	Provide the Group terms of reference for Limestone Coast Water Steering Committee	Complete
2.1	Request from Group for extraction and allocation for each management area + holding licences info.	Complete
5.3	Have a session on the drains to provide members more information.	Complete
6.0	Pull out key concepts slide and provide on members project page.	Complete
6.1	LC Landscape Board to send out dates for meetings for the first 6 months of 2025.	Complete
6.3	LC Landscape Board to query DEW about providing IMAT table to the Group.	Complete
8.1	LC Landscape Board staff to provide some examples of reductions vs restrictions using same example – do a one pager example.	Complete. Document provided at Meeting 10.
9.1	LC Landscape Board staff to reword an equity principle and bring back the group.	Complete. Updated principles provided at Meeting 10. Document not discussed.
9.2	LC Landscape Board to consider a principle around economic use.	Complete. Updated principles provided at Meeting 10. Document not discussed.
9.4	LC Landscape Board to update the amendment process timeline.	Complete. Timeline prepared for meeting, time didn't allow. To be provided out of session.

CONFIRMED