



Environment Protection Authority – Hunter River Salinity Trading Scheme Operations Committee - Minutes

Today's Meeting Date:	14 October 2019	Next meeting date:	18 May 2020
Meeting location:	Bayswater Power Station	Last Meeting Date:	21 May 2019
Meeting opened at:	10:15am	Meeting closed at:	12:15pm
Convenor	Mitchell Bennett	Minute Taker:	Mitchell Bennett
Present:	Dr WEJ Paradise - Chair Peter Jaeger - Discharge Licence Holder -Wambo Coal Christopher Rooney - Discharge Licence Holder - AGL Macquarie Robyn Parker River Management Committee – Local Land Services Ken Bray – Irrigators Representative - Hunter Valley Water Users Association Forugh Dorani - NSW Department of Industry, Land and Water Division Mitchell Bennett – Environment Protection Authority (EPA) Martin Prendergast – WaterNSW		
Apologies:	Bianca Morton - EPA		

No	Agenda Item	Action	Person Responsible	Completion Date
1	3. Review of minutes and actions from previous meeting	Provide further detail of the EPA / WaterNSW Service Level Agreement and invite comment.	Bianca Morton	30 October 2019
2	3. Review of minutes and actions from previous meeting	Demonstrate how a discharge event is managed.	Martin Prendergast	8 May 2020
3	4. Performance Report 2018-19	Develop a quality assurance, audit and reporting process.	Mitchell Bennett	8 May 2020
4	6. Update on Government Structural Changes Related to Water Resource Management	Distribute a link to Greater Hunter Regional Water Strategy	Bianca Morton	30 October 2019
5	7. General Business	Clarify whether Carolyn Walsh has been formally appointed as chair of the EPA board.	Bianca Morton	30 October 2019

Agenda Item	Main Discussion Points	Actions	Status
1. Acknowledgement of country	The chair acknowledged the traditional owners of the site.		
2. Welcome	The chair welcomed the committee and acknowledged new member, Ms Parker.		
3. Review of minutes and actions from previous meeting	<p>Action 1: The EPA distributed its Service Level Agreement with WaterNSW to committee members. The EPA received no comment prior to the meeting. Dr Paradise asked for more detail on the calculation of the proportion of the cost of operating the monitoring network specifically for the scheme. Mr Prendergast advised that unregulated streams are only monitored so that scheme discharge opportunities can be predicted.</p> <p>Actions 2 and 3: \$40,000 set aside for Credit Register upgrades in the 2017-18 budget were not spent and therefore participants were not invoiced for this amount. Consequently, this amount was not carried over to the following year.</p> <p>Action 4: WaterNSW will demonstrate how a discharge event is managed at the May 2020 meeting. Mr Prendergast noted that new model software is being introduced.</p>	<p>Provide further detail of the EPA / WaterNSW Service Level Agreement and invite comment.</p> <p>Demonstrate how a discharge event is managed.</p>	

	Action 5: See agenda item 6.		
4. Performance Report 2018-19	<p>Mr Bennett reported that during 2018-19 there were no discharge events in the Upper Sector. There was one discharge event into the blocks of water that passed Singleton on 2 and 3 April 2019 in the Lower and Middle Sectors. No industries discharged into this event. Instead of discharging, mines and power stations retained water for coal processing, dust suppression and power generation. 20,800 tonnes of salt flowed down the Hunter River past Singleton in 2018-19. This is similar to the previous year. 5,800 tonnes of salt were authorised to be discharged, but no saline water was discharged under the scheme. Warkworth Mining Ltd was fined \$15,000 by the EPA for allegedly allowing saline water to overflow from a storage dam. Discharge of saline water was not permitted from this dam under the scheme.</p> <p>Mr Bray noted that the amount of salt that was authorised to be discharged may appear large to those who do not understand the scheme. Mr Prendergast explained that the permitted discharge volume was increased when there was no discharge early in the event. Mr Bennett noted that this process would need to be reviewed during the demonstration of the management of a discharge event at the next meeting. In response to a question from Ms Parker, Mr Prendergast explained that discharge event notification times vary. Industries in the upper catchment tend to get less notice than those farther down the Hunter Valley.</p> <p>Dr Paradice asked for greater detail to be included in the report. He suggested maps of the scheme area and monitoring locations, a list of credit holders and details of flow thresholds. Mr Bennett noted that background information on the scheme is available on the EPA website and that that the annual report focused on the annual performance against targets. Dr Paradice was of the view that the document should be seen as a “stand alone” document which has the necessary information to provide the reader with a good understanding of the context and performance of the scheme, as had been the case in previous years. It was agreed that an audit and quality assurance process would be developed, and the results regularly reported to the committee.</p>	Develop a quality assurance, audit and reporting process.	

	Dr Paradise noted that the word “Lower” should replace “Upper” in the last paragraph on page 4 of the draft report. A dashed line should be used for flow rate on the graphs so that the blue line does not appear green where it crosses yellow shaded areas.		
5. Expenditure Report 2018-19	Mr Bennett reported that invoiced scheme costs during 2018-19 were \$84,197 less than budgeted. This was mainly because proposed model and credit register developments were not carried out. In response to a question from Ms Parker, Mr Bennett explained that the costs of the scheme do not increase if there are more discharge events because systems must be maintained even when there are no discharge events.		
6. Update on Government Structural Changes Related to Water Resource Management	Mr Dorani reported that the Water Group sits within the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment. The Minister for Water, Property and Housing is Minister Pavey. Jim Bentley is the Chief Executive Officer of the Water Group. The Water Policy, Planning and Science section is responsible for water planning, analytics, policy and science. Twelve Regional Water Strategies are being developed to assess each region’s water security, challenges and opportunities. The Greater Hunter strategy is the first produced. It is now being implemented. In developing this strategy, risks from changes in flow have been simulated.	Distribute a link to Greater Hunter Regional Water Strategy	
7. General Business	Mr Bennett reported that the EPA continues to be an independent statutory authority that sits within the Environment, Energy and Science Group. Tracy Mackey has been appointed as EPA Chief Executive Officer. Carolyn Walsh is chair of the EPA Board. Dr Paradise asked whether Ms Walsh is acting chair or whether she had been formally appointed.	Clarify whether Carolyn Walsh has been formally appointed as chair of the EPA board.	
8. Field inspection	The committee inspected AGL’s Lake Liddell discharge point and water management system.		
	Next Meeting: 18 May 2020 Singleton		