

NSW Wetland Recovery Program

Community Consultation Summary for the Gwydir Valley

Prepared for



Prepared by



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Abbreviations used in this report

WRP	Wetland Recovery Program
SKM	Sinclair Knight Mertz
BRGCMA	Border Rivers Gwydir Catchment Management Authority
MCA	Multi-criteria analysis
S&D	Stock and Domestic

1. Introduction

1.1. Introduction

Hassall & Associates was contracted by Sinclair Knight Mertz (SKM) to conduct community consultation for the Border Rivers Gwydir Catchment Management Authority (BRGCMA) to discuss the Wetland Recovery Program (WRP). This report provides a summary of the community responses received. It should be noted that the report presents the opinions and ideas of participants as presented in the consultation process and not those of Hassall & Associates, SKM or CWCMA. The responses have not been checked for validity or feasibility.

1.2. Consultation planning

SKM and Hassall & Associates conducted a preliminary workshop with representatives of the BRG CMA and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The purpose of this workshop was to:

- § update participants on the progress of the project, including the development of the proposed multi-criteria analysis (MCA) project evaluation approach and the project development tool;
- § seek ideas from participants for possible projects in the Gwydir Valley; and
- § plan the target audience and approach for community consultation.

1.3. Purpose of the consultation

The purpose of the consultation was primarily to seek community ideas about possible wetland recovery projects and encourage the development of these ideas. In addition, through discussions with stakeholders, community values and objectives were identified that may inform the development of the MCA.

1.4. Consultation approach

Key stakeholder groups were identified by the participants at the planning workshop. Additional stakeholders were identified by the WRP Coordinator. A list of all stakeholders is provided in Appendix 1.

All identified community stakeholders were contacted by letter or email, informing them of the WRP. Telephone calls were then made to follow up these letters.

As a result of these calls, a number of groups expressed interest in further discussing project ideas. In addition, another landholder was also identified as an individual with a possible project idea.

SKM contacted State Water, DNR, University of New England and the Department of Primary industries to encourage interest in the project.

The groups and individuals that expressed interest in exploring project ideas were:

- § Mallowa Water Users Association;
- § Lower Gwydir Water Users Association;
- § Gwydir Valley Irrigators Association;
- § Sam Kirkby (individual landholder);
- § Department of Primary Industries (NSW DPI); and
- § University of New England.

Project ideas with the Gwydir Valley Irrigators, Sam Kirkby, University of New England and NSW DPI were further explored and developed by SKM via telephone and email. Face to face meetings were conducted with the Mallowa and Lower Gwydir Water Users Association during early April, 2007. The remaining sections of this report provide a summary of the face to face meetings held.

2. Mallowa Stock & Domestic Water Users Association

The members of the Mallowa Stock & Domestic Association in attendance at the meeting were Ian Johnson, Bruce Carter, Peter Guyer and Bryce Woods. Liz Savage (BRGCMA), Tony Church (SKM) and Jack Knowles (Hassall & Associates) were also in attendance.

Association members provided information about a hydrological study that is currently being undertaken by Steve Wyllie at WRL and funded by EnviroFund. They were keen to access additional funding to finalise this study. This study would enable them to identify breakouts and chokes along the system and target works that may be required.

Association members expressed interest in accessing funding to upgrade the regulator at the Mallowa offtake. The regulator is currently not automated and accessing high flows was therefore not always possible. Association members indicated that rules in the water sharing plan regarding the sharing of supplementary flows also affected the volume of high flow water in the Mallowa Creek.

Association members also expressed interest in accessing funding for minor works along the system. These included works to relieve chokes and minor piping works to connect a small number of households that were not currently connected to the creek for domestic supply. These households were carting water from the creek.

Association members clearly articulated that they were not interested in replacing the current stock and domestic delivery through Mallowa Creek with a piped system. They raised a key concern that the stock and domestic water supply had added environmental benefits, and that removing these from this system would have negative local environmental impacts. They felt that, as the Mallowa was not part of the Gwydir Regulated River, they would not be able to access environmental flows from the Environmental Contingency Allowance in the Gwydir Regulated River Water Sharing Plan. Thus, they believed that stock and domestic flows were the only source of water for the Mallowa.

Association members indicated that key considerations when allocating funding to projects would be that:

- § the project has strong local community support;
- § the project would result in positive environmental impacts; and
- § local environmental values are not diminished.

Association members expressed strong interest in progressing applications for the project ideas discussed at the meeting.

3. Lower Gwydir Stock & Domestic Users Association

The members of the Lower Gwydir Stock and Domestic Users Association (LGSDUA) present at the meeting were Fiona and Charles Brett and John ???. Liz Savage (BRGCMA), Tony Church (SKM) and Jack Knowles (Hassall & Associates) were also in attendance.

The LGSDUA scheme is comprised of 25 water users (21 users in the western part of the scheme, plus an additional 4 in the eastern part of the scheme) that accessed stock and domestic water through a 30km series of drains. Currently, 4000ML in stock and domestic replenishment flows were provided under the Water Sharing Plan. Recent works under the Cap and Pipe the Bore Program, meant that all users in the scheme had secure stock water supplies, and thus the only supply that would be required from the river was for domestic purposes.

The LGSDUA members present indicated a strong interest to explore options for providing piped domestic supply, sourced from either from the Gwydir or Mehi Rivers.

A number of challenges were identified throughout the meeting. These included:

- § the need for a permanent weir or deep hole in the water source to ensure continual supply;
- § the need for storages on the properties (ground tanks are currently used); and
- § power supply to pump sites on river.

The LGSDUA members indicated that they would pursue further information about likely capital costs from DNR, using the Lower Gingham project as a reference. In addition, they indicated that they would explore community interest, and establish demand requirements by convening a meeting of the Association. SKM and Hassall & Associates committed to providing a list of required information to assist the LGSDUA. This list has since been provided.

Appendix 1: List of Stakeholders

Name	Organisation	Status
Janelle Montgomery	NSW DPI	SKM discussing project idea
Glenn Wilson	University of New England	SKM discussing project idea
Tara Schalk	DNR	SKM contacted
Geoff Ellerton	State Water	SKM contacted
Peter Guyer	Mallowa S&D Association	Face to face meeting, SKM discussing project idea
Bryce Woods	Mallowa S&D Association	Face to face, SKM discussing project idea
Charles Brett	Lower Gwydir S&D Association	Face to face, SKM discussing project idea
David Aber	Moree Plains Shire Council	Letter sent
Michael Murray	Gwydir Valley Irrigators Association	SKM discussing project idea
Lesley Blackburn	Gingham S&D Association	Letter sent, email to L Savage
Peter Stewart	Mollino Stewart	BRGCMA provided update of Gingham consultation.
Terry Murphy and Phil Fleming	Ramsar landholder	Contacted personally by L Savage
Howard Blackburn	Ramsar landholder	Letter sent
Bruce Southeron ¹	Ramsar landholder	Letter and telephone discussion. Expressed no interest.
Andy & Shane Murphy	Ramsar landholder	Letter sent
Ron Greentree	Ramsar landholder	Letter sent
David & Leonie Doran	Ramsar landholder	Letter sent

¹ S Croker indicated that Bruce Southeron was a leader of the Ramsar landholders