



Pioneer Valley Water Co-operative Limited

INFORMATION BULLETIN

August 2008

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we cover the
following area:-***

- Pioneer Valley Water Resource Plan (WRP) - Groundwater Amendment

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Pioneer Valley Water Resource Plan

Groundwater Amendment

This bulletin is for the information of all members of the Co-operative, particularly those who access groundwater supplies and may be directly impacted by the recent release by the Minister for Natural Resources and Water of a draft amendment to the Pioneer Valley Water Resource Plan (WRP).

The WRP was released in 2002 and currently covers only the surface water supplies associated with the Pioneer River and Sandy Creek catchments. The draft amendment proposes to extend the WRP to include the management of all groundwater in the Pioneer Valley as well as the surface water in the Sandringham and Alligator Creek catchments to the south.

Along with the specific aims of a WRP, one main focus of the amendment is the management of sea water intrusion into the groundwater system along the coast south of Mackay. The draft WRP amendment proposes some very severe actions to protect and manage groundwater resources to provide continued access for existing users of the system.

Although very few PVWater members farm in the area of the Valley directly affected by sea water intrusion into the groundwater, it is important to recognise that all groundwater use must be included to develop management strategies for the entire system. The following are the main proposals in the draft amendment with some comments on impact on PVWater members.

Conversion of existing groundwater Licences to tradable water allocations

In all parts of the Valley except the sea water intrusion area, existing groundwater licences for irrigation will be converted to water allocations at the volumes currently shown on the licences. The converted water allocations will be separate from land and will be able to be bought and sold subject to trading rules to be developed under a Resource Operations Plan (ROP). Groundwater allocations will not be interchangeable with surface water allocations.

The sea water intrusion groundwater area is in two sections. The coastal section comprises the areas along Bakers and Sandy Creeks upstream to the tidal limits and most of the area east of the Bruce Highway south of Mackay. The other section is the area inland west of the highway.

For the inland section, between 55% and 60% of the current licensed volume will be converted to a water allocation with the balance remaining as a water licence. The unconverted volume will not be able to be used for at least five years. In the coastal section, no part of the current licensed volume will be converted to a water allocation and no use at all will be permitted for five years. A review of the management strategy will be conducted after five years to assess its performance.

In areas where licences are converted fully or partially to water allocations, the water allocations will be subject to determination of an announced allocation level each water year.



Expansion of area where groundwater licences are required

The draft WRP amendment proposes to expand the area where an authorisation is required to pump groundwater for irrigation. The areas where PVWater members may be affected are the north side of the Pioneer River and the McGregor Creek area. Once the WRP amendment is finalised, owners of irrigation bores in these areas will be given 60 business days to notify the Department of Natural Resources and Water of the existence of their bore or bores. If notification is not provided, the bores must not be used. The Department will calculate a volumetric water entitlement for bores notified to them and where there is existing use from the bores. Some of these entitlements will be tradable water allocations and some will be water licences.

In Cattle Creek above Tannalio and Finch Hatton and Owens Creeks areas where there is direct connection between surface water in the creek and water in the adjacent alluvial aquifer, the two water supplies will be considered as a single resource and managed as surface water. This means that any bore or well used for irrigation in these areas will be managed under water licences with volumetric use limits. These licences will not be tradable separate from land.

Stock and domestic bores

The draft amendment places control on the drilling of stock or domestic bores in a large part of the Pioneer Valley and will require the owners of unlicensed stock and domestic bores in all parts of the Valley to notify the Department of the existence of the bores.

In urban areas where town water is supplied, there is to be no further drilling of stock or domestic bores. Replacement bores will be allowed except in the area where sea water intrusion has occurred.

In the areas of the Valley where groundwater is heavily developed, one new bore for stock or domestic use will be allowed per property provided there are no other bores on the property that could be used for stock or domestic water. Once again, no new bores will be allowed in the sea water intrusion area. Further, for any land subdivided after 28 June 2008 a new stock or domestic bore will only be allowed to be drilled on one of the subdivided lots.

In all other areas, there will be no limitation on stock or domestic bores and the growth in stock and domestic bores in these areas will be monitored by the Department.

Meters are not proposed to be installed on any stock or domestic bores.

Owners of stock or domestic bores in the Upper Cattle, Owens and Finch Hatton Creeks will be required to notify the Department of their existing bores within 80 days of a notice being issued. Owners in other areas will be required to provide notification within 180 days of finalisation of the WRP.

Comments on draft amendment of WRP

An Overview Report and the draft amendment to the Pioneer Valley Water Resources Plan are available for inspection from the Department of Natural Resources and Water. Maps showing the details of the areas of the Valley where the proposed arrangements are to apply are available in this documentation.

Information is also available on the website <http://www.nrw.qld.gov.au/wrp/pioneer.html>.

Comments on the draft are to be provided to the Department by 5th September 2008.