



Coastal Burnett groundwater management area—water resource planning process

The Burnett Basin Water Resource Plan (the plan) was amended in November 2007 to include the coastal Burnett groundwater management area (CBGMA).

Purpose of plan

The plan provides a framework for sustainable management and allocation of groundwater within the CBGMA.

The amendment process was initiated because of concerns over water availability caused by declining aquifer levels, ecosystem needs and progressive seawater intrusion.

The plan will:

- define the availability of groundwater in the CBGMA
- provide a consistent, whole-of-aquifer management approach that will integrate with the existing water resource plan
- provide tradable water allocations
- reverse degradation of natural ecosystems.

Plan outcomes

Key outcomes of the plan include:

- continued access by current authorised users to the groundwater resource
- maintenance or improvement in groundwater levels to support native plants and animals
- reduction in seawater intrusion and protection of aquifers from further intrusion.

Implementation of plan

The plan will be implemented by amending the existing Burnett Basin Resource Operations Plan.

The resource operations plan will:

- detail the process for converting groundwater licences
- define water sharing rules
- establish groundwater monitoring and reporting requirements
- outline rules for water trading.

The department is consulting water users and preparing the resource operations plan. The draft resource operations plan will be released for public comment via a formal submission process. It is expected that the draft resource operations plan will be released in mid-2009 and finalised by early 2010.

Together, the plan and resource operations plan introduce new arrangements for access to groundwater within the CBGMA.

Plan areas

The CBGMA is considered as two areas, A and B (see Figure 1).

Water allocations

Landholders with existing irrigation entitlements in Area A and irrigation users in Area B who have lodged a notice of works form will be granted a tradable water allocation when the resource operations plan is finalised.

The establishment of water allocations will change the way water entitlements are specified and managed. Existing water entitlements are currently attached to land and can only be bought and sold with the land to which they apply. Water allocations are separate assets that can be traded and moved independently of land, subject to rules specified in the resource operations plan.

The water allocation process sets up a water trading process where members of the public can buy and sell water allocations, just like buying and selling land.

This market-based system is expected to promote the movement of water to high value uses. It will also provide an incentive for efficiency, with entitlement holders able to sell surpluses, or use them to enhance production.

The rules for trading water allocations will be developed in consultation with the community as part of the resource operations plan process.

Fact sheet W135 details new arrangements within the CBGMA for access to groundwater for irrigation purposes.

Fact sheet W131 details the new arrangements within the CBGMA for access to groundwater for stock and domestic purposes.



Helping the environment

It is important to manage our groundwater resources effectively to protect water users and the environment. Environmental flow objectives are detailed in the water resource planning process and help to ensure:

- sustainability of wetlands and the water table
- base flows in aquifers when surface flows fall below the watertable
- adequate aquifer discharge into the ocean to maintain the health of marine ecosystems such as seagrass and fish habitats.

purposes. However, the introduction of water trading through the forthcoming resource operations plan will provide opportunities for new water users to purchase existing groundwater allocations. The rules and limitations for water sharing and trading will be detailed in the resource operations plan.

Further information

For more information on the coastal Burnett groundwater management area, go to the department's website <www.nrw.qld.gov.au> or contact the Bundaberg water services group on 07 4131 5855.

Provision for future water requirements

The plan does not provide for any additional groundwater to be made available from the CBGMA for irrigation

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For further information phone 13 13 04

Figure 1: Coastal Burnett groundwater management area map

