



Hunter River Salinity Trading Scheme Operations Committee – Meeting Minutes

Meeting:	HRSTS Operations Committee	Date:	Friday 7 June 2024
Location:	Microsoft Teams	Time:	10:00-12:00
Last Meeting Date:	10 November 2023	Next Meeting Date:	14 November 2024
Present:	<p>Dr WEJ Paradise (WP) – Chair</p> <p>Lisa Richards (LR) – Discharge Licence Holder – BHP – Mt Arthur Coal</p> <p>Gary Mulhearn (GM) – Discharge Licence Holder – Yancoal MTW</p> <p>Craig White (CW) – Discharge Licence Holder – Bengalla</p> <p>Robyn Parker (RP) – River Management Committee – Local Land Services</p> <p>Ken Bray (KB) – Irrigators Representative – Hunter Valley Water Users Association</p> <p>Christopher Rooney (CR) – Discharge Licence Holder – AGL Macquarie</p> <p>Danielle Dougherty, Mgr Coastal Waters (DD) – NSW Department Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water (DCCEEW)</p> <p>Mahmood Khan (MK) – Water NSW</p> <p>Partha Saha (PS) – Water NSW</p> <p>Ben Mulhearn (BM) – Water NSW</p> <p>Kate Masters (KM) – Water NSW</p> <p>Audrey Yim (AYi) – EPA</p> <p>Alex Young (AYo) – EPA</p> <p>David Posniak (DP) – EPA</p> <p>Vanessa Arnold (VA) – EPA</p> <p>Hamish Rutherford (HR) – EPA</p> <p>Corrie Ford (CFd) – EPA</p> <p>Celeste Forestal (CFs) – EPA</p> <p>Shirley Huang (SH) – EPA</p>		
Apologies:	<p>Thava Palanisami (TP) – Community Representative</p> <p>Katrina Van Lint (KL) – EPA</p> <p>Jackie Roberts (JR) – EPA</p> <p>Neil Kelleher (NK) – DCCEEW</p> <p>Melissa Bell (MB) – EPA</p>		
Guests:	<p>Molly Walker (MW) – DCCEEW</p> <p>Kate Snow (KS) – EPA</p> <p>Juliet Corish (JC) – EPA</p> <p>Alison Thompson (AT) – EPA</p> <p>Katie Pratt (KP) – EPA</p> <p>Kate Davison (KD) – EPA</p> <p>Michael Fitzgerald (MF) – EPA</p>		

Agenda Item	Main Discussion Points				Actions																																								
1. Welcome, Acknowledgement of Country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Committee and attendees acknowledged the traditional owners of the lands on which all attendees (in person and online) attended the meeting. 																																												
2. Declarations of Interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No declarations of interest were announced. 																																												
3. New Attendees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All attendees introduced themselves to the meeting group. 																																												
4. Previous Meeting Minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minutes accepted 																																												
5. Actions from Previous Meeting - Update	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Action Item No</th> <th>Action</th> <th>Party Responsible</th> <th>Status</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>EPA to consider splitting the graphs into different time periods or plots where necessary so the reader can access the information more readily. Consider a logarithmic scale if the figures are across a large range.</td> <td>EPA</td> <td>Completed Report in approval chains, working in-house to provide interactive charts</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>EPA to capture the role of the sector credit factor and its impact on discharge opportunities.</td> <td>EPA</td> <td>Completed Covered in more detail in draft report</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3</td> <td>EPA to include more detail about the emergency discharge permitted last year</td> <td>EPA</td> <td>Completed</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4</td> <td>WaterNSW to assist the EPA in investigations into March/April 2023 EC spike.</td> <td>WaterNSW</td> <td>In progress Still looking at the data, keeping an eye on EC levels, nothing conclusive so far</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5</td> <td>GM to liaise with EPA Operations on 400EC matter.</td> <td>Gary Mulhearn</td> <td>In progress</td> </tr> <tr> <td>6</td> <td>EPA to update where appropriate the progress on the Regulation Review to NSW Minerals Council.</td> <td>EPA</td> <td>In progress</td> </tr> <tr> <td>7</td> <td>EPA to seek internal advice on confirmation for where funds for the scientific study should come from.</td> <td>EPA</td> <td>In progress Sorting out legal advice</td> </tr> <tr> <td>8</td> <td>EPA to send out communication details on modern upgrades in December 2023</td> <td>EPA</td> <td>Completed</td> </tr> <tr> <td>9</td> <td>EPA will consult with stakeholders when developing guidance on the emergency</td> <td>EPA</td> <td>In progress</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Action Item No	Action	Party Responsible	Status	1	EPA to consider splitting the graphs into different time periods or plots where necessary so the reader can access the information more readily. Consider a logarithmic scale if the figures are across a large range.	EPA	Completed Report in approval chains, working in-house to provide interactive charts	2	EPA to capture the role of the sector credit factor and its impact on discharge opportunities.	EPA	Completed Covered in more detail in draft report	3	EPA to include more detail about the emergency discharge permitted last year	EPA	Completed	4	WaterNSW to assist the EPA in investigations into March/April 2023 EC spike.	WaterNSW	In progress Still looking at the data, keeping an eye on EC levels, nothing conclusive so far	5	GM to liaise with EPA Operations on 400EC matter.	Gary Mulhearn	In progress	6	EPA to update where appropriate the progress on the Regulation Review to NSW Minerals Council.	EPA	In progress	7	EPA to seek internal advice on confirmation for where funds for the scientific study should come from.	EPA	In progress Sorting out legal advice	8	EPA to send out communication details on modern upgrades in December 2023	EPA	Completed	9	EPA will consult with stakeholders when developing guidance on the emergency	EPA	In progress				<p>EPA to carry forward in-progress action items to next meeting:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> EPA to publish annual performance report to EPA website with more details about emergency discharge opportunities. WaterNSW to assist the EPA in ongoing investigations into March/April 2023 EC spike. EPA Operations liaise with Gary Mulhearn on 400EC matter. EPA to update where appropriate the progress on the Regulation Review to NSW Minerals Council. EPA to seek internal advice on confirmation for where funds for the scientific study should come from. EPA will consult with stakeholders and planning out of session meeting to develop guidance on the emergency discharge defence provision in the POEO (HRSTS) Regulation.
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	<p>discharge defence provision in the POEO (HRSTS) Regulation.</p> <p>10 EPA to circulate invite to Hunter River forum to HRSTS Committee members.</p> <p>11 Send details of credit auction once date is finalised.</p>	EPA	Completed	
6. HRSTS Credit Auction Summary	<p>EPA Presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DP presented HRSTS Credit Auction results. Waiting for invoices to be finalised and will then publish the credit auction report on EPA website. 			
7. HRSTS Proposed Budget 2024-25 FY	<p>EPA Presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> AYi presented 2024-25 FY proposed budget. Costs mostly unchanged but with added CPI indexation. Additional costs for 2024-25 financial year will be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upgrades to water model which will provide participants with responsiveness and timeliness; MK is working with the modelling team to determine costs. Bringing credit auction platform in-house and taking this opportunity to upgrade it. Meeting expenses as one will be face to face, the other will be online. Question regarding any remaining budget for 2023-24 FY. 			<p>7. MK to provide costs of water model upgrades next year.</p> <p>8. EPA to provide update on 2023-24 FY expenditure in November 2024 meeting.</p>
8. Water NSW Presentation	<p>WaterNSW Presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Last 6 months received average rainfall for this period, with rainfall mainly in April and May, minimum opportunities to publish registers. There was a release from Glenbawn Dam in February for irrigators. Announcements of river registers in 2024 for the middle and lower sectors and only opportunities in June for the upper sector. There have been 14 total opportunities in 2024 to date. 4G upgrades are mostly complete, currently working through some technical issues with 1 participant. Also working with a participant who wants to re-join the scheme to upgrade their system. Rainfall runoff model upgrade will help the scheme to better forecast rainfall and salinity well in advance. Less chances of missing opportunities, particularly in the upper sector, as there are less registers in the area. It will increase accuracy and timeliness for opportunities. Better forecast to reduce subsequent revised publication of registers. LR and DD support the model upgrade. 			<p>9. WaterNSW to include a split of river registers published between sectors for future meetings.</p> <p>10. WaterNSW to add a table of the river register along with the link into email alerts when issuing discharge opportunities.</p>
9. Environmental Water Releases and Discharge Opportunities – Discussion	<p>DCCEEW Presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental Water Allowance (EWA) is a form of planned environmental water (PEW) set aside in a water sharing plan. Focus simulating natural flow event of rainfall. Focus on local fish to migrate downstream when they receive a pulse of fresh water with careful management of receding flowrate. 			<p>11. EPA and DCCEEW will summarise discussion points and bring back options regarding managing the</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to manage the scheme during these environmental releases? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ GM expects the scheme will continue. ○ LR asked what the harm is there from discharging during environmental water releases when the scheme manages salinity. ○ MW explained they are not sure if it causes no harm, no ecological study has been completed to support this. Fish migrate using salinity gradients to know where to move. ○ CR mentions supplementary access should take priority. ○ KB noted that communication of these events is important. ○ LR responded if there's significant rainfall there should be no restrictions unless there is a basis that it will have detrimental effects on the environmental flow. Understands the ecology assessment needs to be done. Wants flexibility during the natural rainfall events as there is already limited flow events in the upper sector. Mines have not had to release water, and do not normally need to but if restricted during high rainfall periods due to environmental releases, then the upper sector will have no opportunities for discharging and may need to organise an emergency discharge. ○ MW explained environmental releases are an annual event, with maximum of 3 weeks and typically this time of the year when fish migrate, also dependent on sufficient rainfall. ○ CR mentioned they might consider alternate arrangements, on wetter years. 	<p>scheme during environmental releases to the committee.</p>
10. EPA Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scheme participants have environment protection licences that have a standard reporting condition; written report on performance with the scheme on an annual basis, submitted 60 days after the end of the financial year. • Identified an opportunity to improve on reporting requirement as non-compliance may have occurred up to 12-14 months prior to reports. • Proposing to modify reporting conditions to report non-compliance in a timely manner. Enabling them to fully understand the root causes of these non-compliance and put in place preventative/corrective actions to prevent recurrence. • EPA will write to licensees to provide a draft licence variation; participants will have an opportunity to comment before finalising any changes to licences. 	11. EPA to send draft licence variation to participants for comment.
11. General Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee refresh 2024. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Next Operations Committee meeting will be the last before new members are appointed in December 2024. 	
12. Next Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Out of session online meeting in September to discuss emergency dilution arrangement clause and guidance material. Meeting time may change as LR will be away for 3 weeks in September. • In person meeting in Singleton on Thursday 14 November 2024. 	<p>12. EPA to send out of session online meeting invite.</p> <p>13. EPA to arrange another site visit for the next Operations</p>

		Committee meeting.
13. Meeting Closed at 12pm		