

Maitland Senior Citizens Centre – Monday 15th November 2004
Attendees: 20

Questions Raised (open feedback session)

- Lower Hunter project been seen as a fishermans project, not for rural rate payers.
- Work already been done and paid for by the people. Seem to be funding studies when nothing is being done to stop the degradation of the river
- Over the last 54 years so many studies have been completed, nothing has been done
- Study written by Crawford – wanted authorities to be responsible. Urban and industrial outfall is killing the river
- Open cut mines degrading the water quality of the Paterson River
- Previous studies have focused on the result and not the source of the problem
- Problems are further upstream. Upstream users from other areas need to be targeted about issues
- Estuary means different things to different people – will be difficult to obtain consensus on goals
- Water quality is the number one issue. Needs to be returned to what it used to be or better.
- Land holders need to be accountable for dispersion of water out of their area, why are they selling drainage rights?
- Community consultation has historically been ignored by the government
- Studies need to incorporate on the ground feedback from people on the land, not just theoretical.

COMMENT CARDS

One received.

Key Issues

- To achieve results, will need to involve upper river users.

What would you like to see happen with the Hunter Estuary?

- Environmental standards physically policed

DISCUSSION GROUP OUTCOMES

Group One (Karen & Shay)

Positives / Values

- Water quality is improving
- We have had rain
- Most people would like to restore the river to better quality
- Healthy ecology – healthy environment
- Good biodiversity – bird life, animals, insects & reptiles

Negatives / Issues

- Industrial/Urban inputs (sewerage, fertilisers & poisons)
- Farming (although contribution decreased over the years)
- Mining inputs
- Well meaning but misguided conservation has caused bank erosion e.g, tree plantings over emphasised, creating additional habitat for foxes becoming a problem

- 4WD access creating bank erosion.
- Plastic trees guards end up in river system
- Too much optimism that there will not be another flood
- Filling in natural waterways
- Over development close to rivers
- The project LGAs are the smallest in HROC. Action needs to target the larger LGAs of Dungog and Cessnock are upstream
- Catchment Management Authority is not effective

Options / Strategies

- Education/consultation via experience/wisdom not just based on theory.
- Ecology to be a core subject in schools.
- Cash re-imburement for land/river bank/riparian conservation
- Stop mine pollution – give EPA and other bodies more powers: implement regulations, prosecute and provide greater accountability
- Development – run off for development linked back to developers. Holding ponds are not substantial enough.
- Catchment Management Authority (CMA) be disbanded and current funding be used on river bank works
- Estuary concerns need more input/authority to govern DAs in LGAs
- Fishing/boating/social – want future generations to be able to fish
- Control Urban Development (population control)
- Stop short term thinking and start controlling licenses to pollute
- Redefine duty of care/responsibilities
- Reassess development in catchment and floodways to minimize impacts to estuary
- Re-educate politicians
- Healthy ecology equals healthy economy

Group Two (Michelle & Phil)

Positives / Values

- Picnic/ramp facilities at Raymond Terrace
- Fish returning to South arm
- The ports service to coal industry
- Improvement in fish numbers in Paterson River
- Salinity trading scheme
- Economic service provided by the estuary by supplying water to supply to mines, irrigators and wine industry
- Between coal and agricultural industry very high reliance on river for regional economy
- Landcare groups, revegetation of buffer zones
- Environmental assets – RAMSAR site

Negatives / Issues

- Maitland Council does not allow planting of trees on river bank (flood mitigation)
- Dredging lower estuary while erosion is not controlled in upper estuary

- 4 knot limits create more wake and further exacerbate erosion
- Cattle access to waterways (including cows, goats, sheep and horses)
- The lack of implementation and enforcement of Water Management Act
- Lack of monitoring of actual water extraction rates
- Pipeline to vineyards and pipeline to Scone
- Impacts of pumping water elsewhere
- Water is too cheap – does not reflect the importance of the resource
- Hexham Swamp gates still closed
- Bureaucracy and government processes takes too long to do anything
- Subdivision of land increasing pressures
- Wentworth swamps require return of tidal flows
- Carp particularly around Paterson River are causing erosion
- Deforestation up the catchment creating increased runoff
- Sedimentation of river as floods no longer deposit on floodplain

Strategies / Options

- Very important to stabilise river banks/erosion control
- Seek further input/ co-operation from coal industry as 'users' of the estuary
- No wash zones instead of 4 knot zones
- Alternate water supply for animals (e.g. trough) instead of river and tributaries
- Education on water use, programs like 'streamwatch'
- Encourage more revegetation by landholders
- Rate relief to encourage rehabilitation and fence off riparian zones
- When land is subdivided, legislate for riparian buffer to be transferred to council and rehabilitated through 'contributions' scheme
- Water Board owned land at Bolwarra provides habitat potential for birds (eg Jabirus). Important to maintain water levels of dams.
- Corridors along riparian zones with walkways
- Floodgate opening opportunities – Wallis/Fishery Creek
- Buy back Wentworth Swamps
- Carp control
- Access to riverbank with walkways
- Reforestation of riparian zones (allow this in Maitland LGA)
- Catchment Management Authority – protected regrowth