

Report card for Never Never Creek Water Source

Background

Water source context		River flows	
Area	95.13 km ²	Low flow index*	8 ML/day (80 th percentile of August [critical month] days).*
Inflowing water source	None	Flow records	Approximately 32 years— 205019 Never Never Creek at Old Road Crossing (11 years) combined with 205014 Never Never Creek at Glennifer Bridge (25 years of data).
Receiving water source	Bellinger River	Stream type	Gaining
*80% of the time average daily flow exceeds 48 ML/day in the critical month of August and this represents low flows.			
Catchment boundary definition			
Never Never Creek Water Source is comprised of all surface waters and alluvial aquifers within the hydrological catchment of Never Never Creek. Tributaries in the water source include Promised Land Creek, Stony Gully, Stony Creek, Buffer Creek and Sweet Water Creek.			
Upriver alluvial aquifer description			
The upriver alluvial aquifer consists of medium to coarse grained sand, silts and gravel deposits. Groundwater from the aquifer is typically highly connected to the surface water. As a result of this connection, coupled with the coarser sediments, water quality is typically good with high yields potentially obtainable in some areas.			
Groundwater Dependent Ecosystems		Groundwater dependent vegetation ecosystems present.	
Licensed water entitlement			
Total surface water entitlement	421 ML/year.		
Licences	19 licences to access surface water.		
Proportion of extraction management unit	11% of the Bellinger River Catchment Extraction Management Unit.		
Total groundwater entitlement	Nil.		
Licences	N/A		

Note: Estimated at January 2020.	
Existing access arrangements during dry conditions	
Cease to take	2 ML/day (95 th percentile), or when there is no visible flow at the point of take or in/out of the take pool.
Reference point	Promised Land Loop Road (staff gauge).

Proposed recommendations

Draft access rules for surface waters	
Cease to pump	Less than or equal to 4 ML/day (90 th percentile) or when there is no visible flow at the location of take.
Commence to pump	24 hours after flows have returned above 4 ML/day
Pumping restrictions	Pumping is permitted for a maximum 8 hours/day when flows are between 4 ML/day and 8 ML/day (80 th percentile). Pumping is unrestricted when flow is greater than 8 ML/day
Reference point	Never Never Creek at Old Crossing Gauge (205019)
Exemptions	Rule does not apply to licensed domestic and stock, local water utilities, pumping related to specific food or animal safety/care or extraction from dams in accordance with conditions of approval.
Draft access rules for groundwater	
Cease to take	Surface water cease to take rule applies.
Commence to take	Surface water commence to take rule applies.
Exemptions	Rule does not apply to licensed domestic and stock, local water utilities, pumping related to specific food or animal safety/care or extraction from take pool in accordance with conditions of approval.
Draft distance rules for groundwater	
Distance rules	<p>A standard suite of rules have been adopted for the upriver alluvials.</p> <p>Distance criteria will apply to new and replacement bores (not current) in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • minimising interference between bores • protecting groundwater dependent culturally significant sites • acid sulfate soils • basic landholder rights • contaminated sites • protecting groundwater dependent sensitive environmental areas.
Exemptions	Exemptions to these rules (e.g. for replacement works) apply in specific circumstances.

Draft licence dealing rules	
Rules	Trade
INTO water source	Not permitted.
WITHIN water source	Permitted
	Conversion
Surface to ground	Permitted.
Ground to surface	Not permitted.
High flows	Permitted.
Draft rules for granting access licences/works approvals	
Aboriginal cultural access licence	Permitted, no greater than 10ML/yr. per application and subject to assessment.
Aboriginal community development access licence	Permitted, subject to assessment.
In-river dams	Permitted, only in streams less than third order, and subject to assessment.
Alluvial bores	Permitted, subject to assessment and distance rules.

Key factors for decisions

- High instream value, high risk to instream value, and high economic dependence.
- In-river dams prohibited in streams of third order or higher to protect high instream values.
- High flow licence conversion applications accepted due to the use of a telemetered flow reference point.
- Applications for Aboriginal Community Development licenses accepted for consideration.
- Trading rules are a result of high values of the water source.
- The alluvial aquifers in this water source are highly connected to their adjoining streams and alluvial groundwater extraction can have an impact on the river. As such, access rules apply to aquifer access licences extracting from the alluvial within 40m of an unregulated river.

Public exhibition

Feedback is particularly sought on the suitability of the proposed access and trading rules.

The draft Bellinger River Area water sharing plan and other fact sheets are available from <https://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water>

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