

Report card for Coastal Bellinger Water Source

Background

Water source context		River flows	
Area	88.34 km ²	Low flow index*	122 ML/day (80 th percentile of November [critical month] days).*
Inflowing water source	Hydes Creek, Bellinger River, Coastal Kalang	Flow records	13 years—Bellinger River at Fosters Gauge (205016).
Receiving water source	None	Stream type	Estuary
*80% the time average daily flow exceeds 122 ML/day in the critical month of November and this represents low flows.			
Catchment boundary definition			
The Coastal Bellinger Water Source comprises the surface water and alluvial groundwater of the hydrological catchment of Bellinger River below the tidal limit to the river mouth at the Pacific Ocean. Coastal floodplain alluvial groundwater is excluded from this water source.			
Upriver alluvial aquifer description			
NA.			
Groundwater Dependent Ecosystems		Groundwater-dependent vegetation ecosystem present.	
Licensed water entitlement			
Total surface water entitlement	122 ML/year.		
Licences	5 licences to access surface water		
Proportion of extraction management unit	4% of the Bellinger River Catchment Extraction Management Unit.		
Total groundwater entitlement	5 ML/day.		
Licences	1 licence to access groundwater.		
Note: Estimated at January 2020.			

Existing access arrangements during dry conditions		
Conditions	Tidal Management Zone	Non-tidal Management Zone
Cease to take	16 ML/day (95 th percentile).	When there is no visible flow downstream of the take site or in/out of the take pool.
Reference point	Bellinger River at Thora gauge (205002).	Take site.

Proposed recommendations

Draft access rules for surface waters		
Rules	Tidal Management Zone	Non-tidal Management Zone
Cease to take	Less than or equal to 56 ML/day (estimated 95 th percentile critical month), or when there is no visible flow at the location point of take.	When there is no visible flow at the take site.
Commence to take	24 hours after flows have returned above 56 ML/day.	24 hours after visible flow has returned to the take site.
Reference point	Bellinger River at Fosters Gauge (205016)	Location of take.
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 and town, 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. 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 • contaminated sites • acid sulphate soils • basic landholder rights • protecting groundwater dependent sensitive environmental areas. 	
Exemptions	Exemptions to these rules (e.g. for replacement works) apply in specific circumstances.	

Draft license dealing rules		
Rules	Trade	
	Tidal Management Zone	Non-tidal Management Zone
INTO water source	Permitted to a maximum additional entitlement of 14 ML for the entire water source.	Permitted to a maximum additional entitlement of 14 ML for the entire water source.
WITHIN water source	Permitted.	Permitted.
Rules	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.	
Coastal wetlands	Not permitted where there is more than minimal harm to Coastal Wetlands mapped under the <i>State Environment Planning Policy (Coastal Management) 2018</i> .	
In-river dams	Permitted, subject to assessment.	
Alluvial bore	Permitted, subject to assessment and distance rules.	

Key factors for decisions

- Medium instream value, medium hydrologic stress, low risk to instream value and low economic dependence.
- Commence to take rule adopted to promote instream value after very low flows have occurred.
- Recommend trades into the tidal pool area up to a limit are allowed due to the low hydrologic stress and low sensitivity of the estuary to inflows (low flows).
- High flow licence conversion applications accepted due to the use of a telemetered flow reference point.
- Coastal wetlands listed under the *State Environmental Planning Policy (Coastal Management) 2018* are located in the estuary.
- Applications for Aboriginal community development licenses accepted for consideration.

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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