



Photo source: with thanks to Tathra Oysters



Natural
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Commission

Review of the South Coast water sharing plans

Report Summary

This slide pack provides an overview of findings and recommendations – the Commission’s full and official advice is available via our website – <https://www.nrc.nsw.gov.au/wsp-reviews>

Acknowledgement of Country

In the south coast plan area the Commission pays its respects to the Yuin and Monaro Nations, Traditional Owners past, present and future, as well as other Aboriginal peoples for whom the waterways in these catchments are significant

Our review

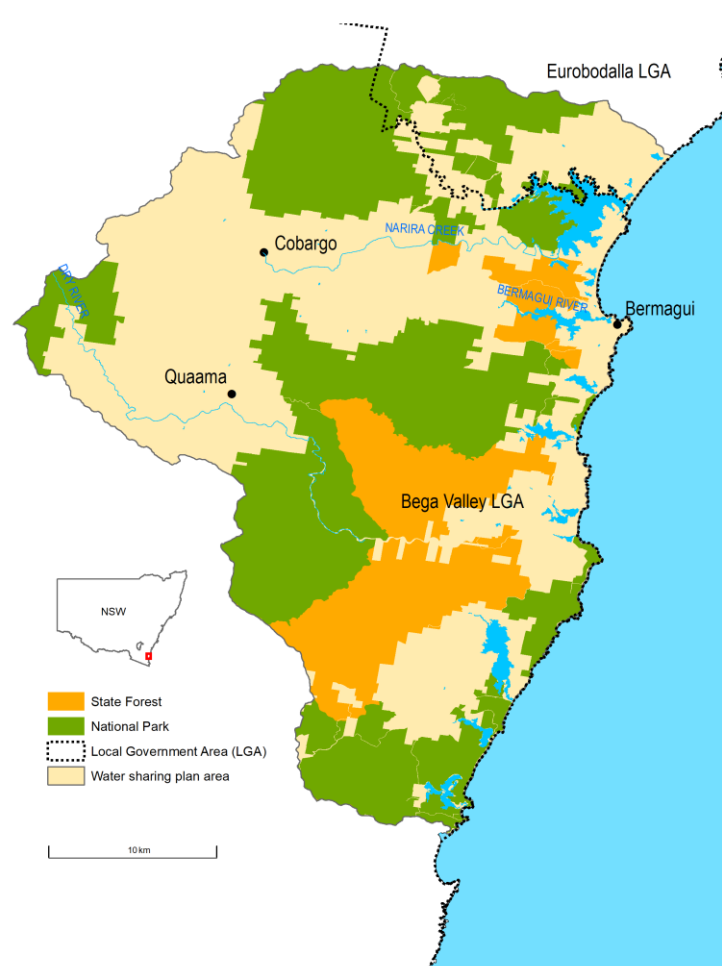
- The Natural Resources Commission (the Commission) has a statutory role under s43A of the *Water Management Act 2000* (the Act) to review water sharing plans approaching expiry
- Our reviews consider if a plan's environmental, social, cultural and economic outcomes have been achieved, and what improvements can be made
- As part of our reviews, we recommend whether a plan should be extended or replaced
- Our reviews consider relevant data and documents, technical advice, stakeholder consultation and public submissions

Bega and Brogo River Area Regulated, Unregulated and Alluvial



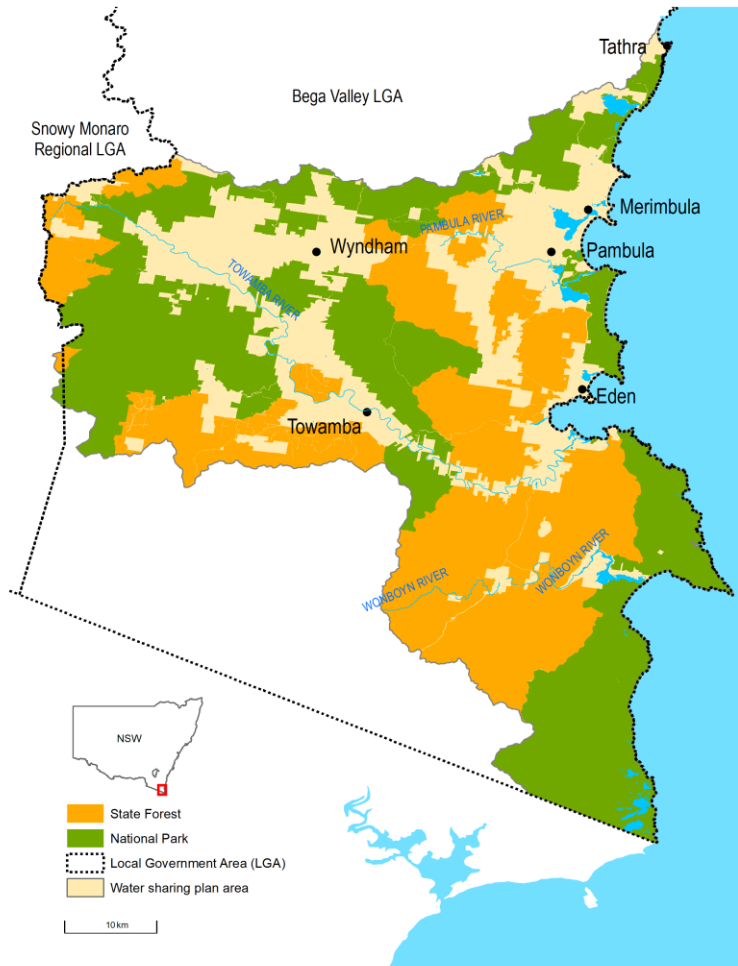
Document Path: U:\MXDS\WATER\2019-20 WSP reviews\Draft maps\Draft Map - Bega Brogo - NP.mxd

Murrumbidgee Area Unregulated and Alluvial



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Towamba River Unregulated and Alluvial



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South Coast review area

- Three Plans were reviewed: Bega and Brogo, Murrah-Wallaga and Towamba water sharing plans
- Agriculture, forestry, fishing, aquaculture and tourism are the key water reliant industries in the area
- Plan areas span much of the Bega Valley shire which was significantly impacted by the 2019-20 bushfires (the Black Summer fires)
- Significant environmental assets with a large number of ICOLLS* and largest area of coastal wilderness in NSW

*Intermittently Closed and Open Lakes and Lagoons

Overview of key issues



Evidence of good practice

The Plans have adopted a source to sea approach so that the needs of estuaries are covered by the plans

Industry led restoration projects in partnership with community and government have helped maintain the condition of waterways



Opportunities for improvement

Drought and bushfires have highlighted the need for improvements to the management of Brogo and Cochrane dams and town water supply.

There are opportunities to aid the recovery of fire affected aquatic environments.

Reduce pressure on low flows in the Bega Brogo Plan area

Examine dam operating rules to improve environmental and social outcomes



Plan remake should:

Set sustainable, numeric LTAAELs*

Opportunities for increased access and storage of high flows, strengthening protections for low flows and GDEs

Provide opportunities for economic growth through improved trade and high flow licences

Improve security of town water supply, including in emergency situations

Recognise native title claims and protect known Aboriginal values

Improve management against extraction limits

Key issues

- The Plans lack sustainable, numerically defined long-term average annual extraction limits (LTAAELs)
- Recent drought highlighted improvements can be made to management of allocation from Brogo Dam

Key recommendations for DPIE-Water

- Establish sustainable, fixed numeric LTAAELs based on best available information including ecological requirements, basic landholder rights and climate change
- Include provisions in the remade Plan that allow for the adjustment of water allocation from Brogo Dam during drought

Reduce pressures from extraction at low flows

Key issues

- Continues to be ongoing pressure on environmental assets and community tension during periods of low flows
- May be an opportunity to reduce pressure on low flows by allowing increased extraction and storage of water at periods of high flow
- Trade is currently limited which may be having a socioeconomic impact
- Modelling should be undertaken to ensure that extraction at high flows does not compromise environmental outcomes

Key recommendations for DPIE-Water

- Investigate feasibility of a high flow LTAAEL
- Undertake further modelling to investigate the potential for water users to have increased access to high flow run off to reduce reliance on low flows and minimise the environmental impacts of take
- Determine metering and monitoring requirements to facilitate understanding of high flow access
- Review trade rules and address barriers and increase flexibility of trade whilst maintaining environmental protections

Strengthen environmental protections

Key issues

- Work needs to be undertaken to determine flow requirements of environmental assets, including estuaries
- Needs of rivers and estuaries post fire warrants consideration
- More information is needed to understand and manage connectivity
- Protections for groundwater dependent ecosystems requires updating in plans

Key recommendations for DPIE-Water

- Develop environmental flow requirements for environmental assets including estuaries
- Update mapping of environmental values using HEVAE mapping
- Undertake monitoring of environmental values at strategic locations
- Consider provisions that are triggered to enable post fire recovery
- Improve understanding of connectivity between aquifers and rivers (like Bega Sands) and enact provisions that allow for consistent management
- Ground-truth presence and extent of-GDEs and define their requirements

Secure town water supply

Key issues

- Town water supply requirements need to be adjusted to appropriately consider requirements triggered by emergency response, meeting peak daily demand and climate change
- Town water requirements should consider risks associated with saltwater intrusion of the the Mid Bega River Sands aquifer
- Replacement Plans should complement planned infrastructure, including water treatment plant upgrades.

Key recommendations for DPIE-Water

- Revisit Total Daily Extraction limits for town water supply
- Consider the need for emergency management provisions for town water supply
- Develop salinity based cease to pump targets to manage and monitor saltwater intrusion

Improving outcomes for Aboriginal people

Key issues

- Lack of proactive involvement of Aboriginal people in the determination of Aboriginal value and rights for the purpose of water planning and management
- No recognition of the native title claim on the South Coast
- No protection of known Aboriginal water values
- Limitations on use of water by Aboriginal people

Key recommendations for DPIE-Water

- Acknowledge the registered native title claim for the South Coast People
- Identify and protect high value cultural sites
- Undertake work to understand Aboriginal water values
- Better support Aboriginal water access and use
- Allocations to be prioritised for cultural water use
- Incorporate Aboriginal water values in water sharing plans and ensure these are included in the NSW Aboriginal Water Strategy



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