

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF BICKHAM COAL BULK SAMPLE

COMMUNITY CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE (BCCC)

**MEETING NUMBER 5 - WEDNESDAY 1ST DECEMBER 2004 HELD AT UPPER
HUNTER SHIRE COUNCIL CHAMBERS AT 4:20PM**

PRESENT:	WARREN COOK	Chairperson
	NAT DOONAN	Community Representative
	MICHAEL SATARA	Community Representative
	GREG SUMMERHAYES	Dept. Primary Industry
	DAVID CASSON	Upper Hunter Shire Council
	FERGUS HANCOCK	DIPNR
	JOHN RICHARDS	Bickham Coal Company
	JOHN HINDMARSH	Bickham Coal Company
	DAVID FOSTER	Bickham Coal Company
APOLOGIES:	LLOYD ROSSINGTON	Community Representative
	DARYL DUTTON	Upper Hunter Shire Council

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING:

- It was confirmed that all committee members had received a copy of the minutes from the previous meeting.
- The minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record of the fourth meeting.

BUSINESS MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES:

- The status of the Upper Hunter Resource Assessment Study was raised. The committee was informed that the study had not been released in draft format.
- The matter of isotope testing in the river would be discussed in the report and overview of BCC's activities.

GENERAL BUSINESS:

- A formal welcome was extended by the Chairperson on behalf of the committee to Fergus Hancock from DIPNR for attending the meeting.

1. UPDATED MONITORING AND RESULTS – J.HINDMARSH – ENVIRONMENTAL OFFICER (BCC)

- The committee received a detailed summary handout in conjunction with a visual slide show and presentation from John Hindmarsh of the results that have been collated from monitoring of both ground and surface water at the Bulk Sample site.
- BCC advised the committee that they had investigated isotope testing to determine connectivity between ground and surface water.
- The investigation had found that the use of artificial or naturally occurring isotopes would not be appropriate or conclusive in this case. A report by Peter Dundon supported this view and outlined, in detail, the technical argument. The report also detailed the use of hydraulic information and chemical analyses as valid methods of determining the level of connection between water sources.
- The representative of DIPNR at the meeting, Fergus Hancock, agreed with the assessment that isotope testing was not appropriate in this case. He commented that isotope testing would make it easier to obtain information about the rate of water migration. However the groundwater regime at Bickham is radically different with a unique re-charge system within the catchment. He indicated that the system is strongly jointed and open and that ground and surface water at Bickham may not be connected. He suggested that the aquifer may be acting as an unconfined aquifer.
- Discussion followed on the use of isotope and chemical analyses to identify water sources. Members of the committee asked a number of questions about the technical issues and these were answered. The members of the committee were encouraged to read the report supplied, as it was detailed and explained many of the issues.
- Discussion also followed about the evidence for connectivity between the river and the groundwater. There were some attempts to separate the issue of whether the Bulk Sample area would impact on the Pages River from whether a later full scale mine proposal would impact on the river. For the Bulk Sample, there was no evidence that the dewatering pumping activity had impacted on the river. Mr Hancock said that, if any connectivity exists, it is immeasurably small.

2. STATUS OF THE BULK SAMPLE – REVIEW OF FUTURE MONITORING AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

- BCC informed the committee that it had several obligations under the Consent Conditions. It would prepare a 6 monthly Environmental Management Report covering the period to December 2004 for submission to the DPI. BCC also said that it would also be audited under ISO 14010/14011 as part of the water licence consent conditions. This independent audit would be carried out by an agreed independent auditor.
- In the post operational phase of the project, the monitoring of groundwater, surface water and dust deposition would continue.

3. STATUS OF THE BULK SAMPLE – CURRENT OPERATIONS

- BCC informed the committee that excavation is complete and that the overburden has been removed. To date 21,000 tonnes of coal has been removed and that this would reach the agreed 25,000 tonnes by the end of next week.
- Mr David Foster said that the only work that remains is rehabilitation of the site which is well underway (as per photos viewed by the committee in the slide presentation) in addition to ongoing monitoring and maintenance of sediment control works. The workforce has been scaled down to 4 operators until fencing and rehabilitation are complete.
- There were also a number of tidy up issues to be addressed: - the clean up work on the coal remnants on the stockpile pad (which had high ash content) which BCC did not want to mix with the saleable coal samples. BCC put forward 2 possible options to the committee for the removal of the coal remnants:-
 1. Trucking all remnants of the stockpile off-site to Rix's Creek.
 2. Finding an on-site location to bury the remnants.
- Members of the committee discussed the options but expressed their concern with burying the remnants on-site because of the issue of spontaneous combustion.

- It was moved by Greg Summerhayes and seconded by Nat Doonan that the Bickham Community Consultative Committee recommend that the remnant of the coal stockpile, which consists of about 3000 tonnes of high ash coal and material from the coal pad floor, would be taken off-site to Rix's Creek for washing, in line with current coal hauling requirements at no more than 500 tonnes per day.
- The motion was passed unanimously.
- The quality and grade of the coal was a question that was raised by a number of committee members.
- BCC reported that the coal is of thermal quality – the type of coal that would be used in power stations. The committee was informed that the composition of the coal is approximately 8% ash, 12% total moisture and 0.4% sulphur with a 6500 kilo-calorie heating content.
- BCC reported that the coal from both the E and G seams contains a significantly lower ash and sulphur content compared to coal that is currently being mined from other operations in the area.
- BCC reported that in recent rain events, all controls to contain sediment have worked satisfactorily with no problems to report. BCC informed the committee that sediment control would be maintained in conjunction with the carrying out of environmental auditing.

4. ISSUE OF COMPLAINT MATTERS:

- On the 17th November 2004, a complaint regarding burning coal at Bickham was referred to BCC from Greg Summerhayes of the DPI. It had also been reported to the EPA, the media and the Upper Hunter Shire Council. The complaint which came from Mrs Gail Collins on behalf of Mine Watch, reported an unnamed source at Blandford who saw smoke coming from the Bulk Sample stockpile at the Bickham site.
- Mr Summerhayes commented that he had investigated the complaint by contacting BCC to discuss their management of the stockpile and was told that there had been no observed heating or smoke since the first instance. He had contacted Mrs Collins and informed her that further information was needed concerning the reported observation. No further information was received.
- Mr Foster also commented that on the 17th November 2004, he had been contacted by the EPA regarding a fire on the property. After a thorough inspection of the site it was

reported that there were no scrub or bushfires and no sign of any smoke at any site on the property.

5. OTHER BUSINESS:

- Notification of the resignation of committee member Lloyd Rossington was received by the Chairperson. It was moved by Nat Doonan and seconded by David Casson that the position of fourth community representative would not be filled following the resignation of Mr Rossington. The motion was carried and the secretary was asked to write to Mr Rossington expressing the committee's appreciation for his contribution.
- The committee discussed the wording of future newspaper articles and the impact that such wording can have on community perception. The Chairperson was questioned on two articles on which he had been asked to provide comment. It was concluded that the comments that he had provided were absolutely in line with the nature of BCC's activities with the Bulk Sample and in line with the discussion at the previous meeting.
- The committee asked BCC where it was positioned in the process towards the EIS. BCC said that by the next meeting it should be able to confirm whether it would proceed to an EIS but at this stage it was no further along the pathway laid out at the last meeting.
- The Chairperson thanked Fergus Hancock for attending the meeting and requested that he receive a copy of the next meeting's minutes.
- The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 16th February 2005 at Upper Hunter Shire Council Chambers.

MEETING CONCLUDED AT 6:15PM