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Sent: Tuesday, 4 February 2014 1:33 PM
To: EPA Continuous Improvement Unit Mailbox
Subject: Salinity scheme submission

We are residents of the Hunter Valley in close proximity to 3 large open cut mines.

Whilst we are in general support of the aims outlined in the briefing paper, we have grave concerns over not just the quantities of water that are dumped in the Hunter basin, but also the quality.

It is all very well to say that when the flows are high, polluters can dump their saline waste water into the catchment and it will go away.

But the big problem is that the salt doesn't go away.

Allowing increased levels of saline water to be dumped will increase the general salinity levels in the area. I think there is no doubt about this.

Anyone who has ever tried to irrigate with only slightly (1000ppm) saline water knows that the plants turn yellow and the saline water leaches other salts from the soil, leaving behind salt. (this has happened to us)

So from that point of view our submission would be :

1. salinity targets for the Scheme are **not raised** above 600 EC at Denman and 900 EC at the confluence of Glennies Creek and at Singleton.
2. the 900 EC target should be lowered to improve water quality for wider range of irrigated crops, health of macro invertebrates and if possible even lower than the World Health Organisation standard which is a maximum of 800 EC for drinking water. Water at 800 doesn't taste very good!
3. salinity credits should be needed for all mine discharges and removal of the flood flow exemption
4. changing the definition of a 'high flow' event so that a discharge event can be triggered at a lower flow, should not be allowed under any circumstances.
5. A need for increased public transparency and access to information including: when and where discharges occur, all available water quality data and results of investigations into the health of the river system.
6. Additional revenue generated via salinity credit auctions should be invested in the monitoring and assessments outlined in The Hunter Catchment Salinity Assessment Report.

These include:

- A more comprehensive and representative groundwater monitoring program for the Hunter catchment
 - Studies to fully understand the environmental effects of the different components of mine and power station discharge water (eg ionic composition, metals/metalloid contamination etc)
 - Strategic real-time monitoring of flow and salinity in the upper Goulburn River catchment
 - Assessment of high EC levels in Wollombi Brook at Warkworth
7. That the actual composition of mine discharges be regularly monitored for silica, heavy metal contaminants, coal etc, not just salinity

Judith and Alan Leslie

