

Shoalhaven Natural Resource & Floodplain Management Committee

Meeting Date: Tuesday, 06 June, 2017
Location: Seven Mile Room, Nowra Administrative Centre
Time: 4.00 pm

Addendum Agenda

Reports

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SN17.9 Shoalhaven Dredging

HPERM Ref: D17/180864

Submitted by: Chris Grounds

Recommendation (Item to be determined under delegated authority)

That this item be dealt with in conjunction with SN17.6 Shoalhaven dredging monitoring update and Rescuing Our Waterways Program Funding update 2017.

Note: This report is from a member of the committee and the comments should not be construed as having been approved or authorised by Council but are provided for discussion at the committee meeting.

1.0 PROPOSAL

That this meeting of the NRFMC in dealing with the Agenda Dredging Report include an addendum to the Report to reflect a broader perspective of the operation of the Shoalhaven Wide Dredging Strategy [SWDS].

2.0 COMMENT

The Dredging Report as presented is professional and accurate but limited in providing detail to establish the full context required in the appropriate assessment and decision making re dredging, especially by this committee.

3.0 CONCERNS

3.1.1. The motivation or stimulus to proposed dredging though this does vary from location to location and requires careful scrutiny.

3.2.1 The engineering reports tend to show that dredging is possible in engineering terms and these can vary over time from the initial presentation to community. The reports may not reflect on the necessity, environmental probity or sustainability of dredging.

3.3.1 Dredging, a sediment removal process, creates a need to dispose of the sediment so then actions are created which in themselves become the rationale for the dredging program.

3.4.1 This influence of natural events, especially ECL events, should provide a known, reported, documented profile and reference point of any report this NRFMC adopted and approves.

3.5.1 Dredging decisions are in part local political decisions in that the final imprimatur is with the elected council of that time or at least a dominant faction of that council.

3.6.1 Staff advice may be ignored.

3.7.1 There have also been clear community engagement issues and whilst technical information follow-up has occurred it is unable to deal with the concerns raised. Documents are disconcertingly long, e.g. REFs, for appropriate community consultation.

4.0 SITE CONCERNS

4.1 Currumbene Creek

4.1.1 The now established motivation was derived from lobbying by commercial operators but most conspicuously from Carnival Cruises through Visit NSW and SCC Tourism, which was not revealed in community consultative meetings and was only revealed through community research and pressure.

4.1.2 Carnival Cruises is notoriously the 'dirtiest' cruise ship company on the globe and has been assessed so in a global audit in 2014 by Friends of the Earth. The involvement of such a company in the highly productive 'green' tourism sector of the Shoalhaven at this site was a very retrograde step.

4.1.3 The August 2015 ECL flooding cleaned the channel entirely of the proposed dredged sand.

4.2 Sussex Inlet

4.2.1 The stimulus to dredging derived from a local petition collected prior to any known dredging strategy. The feedback delivered to SCC staff at a later advisory community meeting at Sussex Inlet provided a different stance on the need to dredge.

4.2.2 The SWDS included a proposal to sand mine at SI as part of the SWDS. This action was incorrectly identified by SCC and failed to acknowledge it was in fact sand mining and illegal. This was pointed out to SCC through public community comment, submission and clear advice from OEH and SCC was forced to accept this and revise the SWDS. The proposal to sell dredge sand should have never occurred.

4.2.3 The August 2015 ECL, as at Huskisson, negated the need for most of the proposed sand dredge in the channel.

4.2.4 A significant outcome of the August 2015 flood was clear and agreed conclusion that dredging would not have altered the flood impact.

4.3 Lake Conjola

4.3.1 One of the key engineering challenges concerned the disposal of dredge sand. In part this was used to build the beach profile on the southern entrance and 6500m³ was shipped off site for various uses. Part of this load, 4500m³, was used to deposit on the dune in mid-section of Mollymook Beach.

4.3.2 This totally buried and obliterated the existing dune vegetation and was replaced by a very limited planting comprising some grasses and 'pigface' at a very low intensity. [This has originally been the plan for sand from CCK shipped to Callala Beach] That continues to offer only very limited surface protection from erosion and a large surface area of bare sand remains. The sand deposited was grey estuarine sand and of very different character to the beach and dune sand at the site. The deposit has collapsed at the beachfront as dry sand. There has been no major erosion episode since the deposit.

4.3.3 It is particularly significant that the report to this committee details how the normal occurrence of rain, storm episodes and tides hindered and negated the dredging work. The dynamics of the natural estuarine system that is Lake Conjola seem not to have been understood or at least recognized.