

DESALINATION UPDATE – REGIONAL NEWSPAPERS APRIL 2008

More community consultation activities announced

More opportunities to have your say on the desalination plant, pipeline and power supply are available through a range of consultation and engagement activities planned for the next few months.

You can contribute to the Environment Effects Statement (EES) studies by providing information to EES researchers on Sunday 4 May (2pm to 6pm) or Monday 5 May (4pm to 8pm).

Whether on your own, or in a group of up to six people, you can register for appointments with researchers.

Technical and scientific researchers will be available to discuss studies on marine environment, flora and fauna, visual impacts, design of plant and pipeline, energy use, noise, vibration, cultural heritage, social effects, traffic, transport, waste management, social and economic effects.

This will be held at Wonthaggi Secondary College, Dudley campus, South Dudley Road. To book, telephone Peter West on 0427 409 619 or email peter.west@dse.vic.gov.au.

Other consultation activities that are occurring include interviews with industry representatives and community members, face-to-face landowner engagement, briefings with community groups, businesses and agencies, information stands at events, website updates and feedback forms.

Also, a range of people and organisations from the Bass Coast region have been invited to take part in community forums in two special interests areas; environment and recreation; and business and tourism. Three rounds of focus group meetings will be held in April, May and June.

For more information on when events are taking place, to register your group for a briefing or request more information, call the Desalination Project Information Office on 56721624 or go to www.ourwater.vic.gov.au

Information displays attract 1000 people

Nearly 1000 people improved their knowledge on desalination from Department of Sustainability and Environment information officers at displays held at Coronet Bay Market, Cowes Night Market and the Gung-Ho Multicultural Festival on the Easter long weekend.

EES studies progress

A number of EES studies on the plant, pipeline and power supply have started.

Plant

Geotechnical drilling has started to research the geology of the site acquired for the plant. This will help determine the best area to position the plant.

In addition, Horizontal Directional Drilling will establish intake and outlet pipes from the site into the ocean, for a temporary seawater sampling plant, in the coming weeks.

Landscape architects are looking at the site to suggest ways for the plant to integrate with the features of the local area, to assist in the eventual design of the plant.

Work is also being done to survey flora and fauna on the plant site to assess the possible effects of construction and operation.

Studies of marine ecology and reef systems are being done to help in determining the best locations for the intake and outlet pipes, and the subsequent design of these structures to minimise impacts on the environment.

Pipeline

Field studies have commenced to identify the best construction route for the 85km underground pipeline, with the consent of landowners.

Studies include flora and fauna assessments and geotechnical surveys, as well as discussions with landowners on suitable locations for the pipe. Study teams are starting in locations that appear to have the highest conservation values so the pipe route might avoid these areas. Studies on the growling grass frog and protected species in waterways that will be crossed by the pipeline have also begun.

Power

The EES studies are investigating three options for power supply to the desalination plant. They include new grid connection, gas-fired generators and a hybrid option. One of the key issues in developing these options is finding a solution that improves power reliability for Bass Coast and South Gippsland communities, who would benefit from upgraded power to the region.

Drilling contract awarded to Gippsland company

Korumburra based company Ancon Drilling has been awarded an \$8.5 million contract as part of the project.

The contract is for Horizontal Directional Drilling at the site including design and construction of inlet and outlet pipes for the later development of a sea water sampling plant.

The inlet and outlet pipes will be more than 800 metres in length and 400mm in diameter.

The sea water sampling plant will provide information for the design of the desalination plant and technologies to treat sea water. These works are subject to an Environmental Management Plan that has been approved by the Victorian Planning Minister.

What about the penguins, whales, dolphins and seals?

Penguins, dolphins, whales, seals and other sea and bird life are important research topics for the Desalination Project EES.

We know from earlier studies and the experience of other desalination plants that these creatures will not be drawn into inlet pipes that collect water for desalination.

Water is drawn into the inlet pipe at a very slow, consistent rate, so larger mobile sea life can easily swim across the screened pipe openings.

Previous studies have indicated that the salty discharge, which returns to normal seawater levels within a short distance of outlet pipes, will have little or no effect on these creatures. The EES will continue research in this area.

To see what the intake and outlet structures of a desalination plant might look like, go to www.ourwater.vic.gov.au and click on the desalination link.

Further information

Desalination Project Information Office, 1 McBride Avenue, Wonthaggi (open Tuesdays - Thursdays, 9.30am - 3pm.)
Phone: 56721624.

DSE Customer Service Centre Phone 136 186.

Email desalination.project@dse.vic.gov.au

www.ourwater.vic.gov.au

Desalination Project, Department of Sustainability and Environment, PO Box 500, East Melbourne 3002.

EES – Department of Planning and Community Development
PO Box 500 East Melbourne Vic 3002 Phone: (03) 9637 9624
www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/planning

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