Mount Pleasant Project
Community Consultative Committee

Minutes of Meeting Held 6 November 2008

Present:

Jennifer Lecky	Chair (acting) – Muswellbrook Shire Council - Councillor
Chris Gidney	Director Environmental Services - Muswellbrook Shire Council
Craig Flemming	Environmental Services - Muswellbrook Shire Council
Trevor Parkinson	Community Representative
Ken Weekes	Community Representative
Patricia Watts	Community Representative
Antony Bijok	Coal & Allied General Manager
Richard Bailey	Coal & Allied Manager Mining
Leah Cook	Coal & Allied Environment Specialist
Jennifer Bowcock	Coal & Allied Community Relations Specialist

Apologies: Karen Portolan (Chair)**,** Jim Lonergan (Community Representative)

Minute Taker:

Leah Cook	Coal & Allied Environment Specialist

1. **Meeting Opened at 12pm:** CCC members met at the MTP office before traveling by bus to the Denman Hotel for lunch and then continuing to CNA's Hunter Valley Operations (HVO).
2. **Emergency Procedures and Housekeeping:** Leah provided a safety briefing with regard to traveling on the bus and access to HVO. All members completed the HVO visitor induction.
3. **Declaration of Pecuniary Interest:** No interests declared.
4. **Confirmation of Minutes: Motion:** The minutes of the previous meeting held 7 August 2008 were accepted. *Moved:* Pat Watts, *Seconded:* Trevor Parkinson.
5. **Matters Arising from Previous Meeting:**
6. **Land Management Update – see presentation**

   Craig – What is the method for removing/controlling box thorn? There was an effective tool that was on ABC's 'New Inventors' that may be worth investigating.

   Action: *Investigate further alternate (invention presented on ABC) means of managing Boxthorn based on (Jennifer Anderson – next meeting)*

   Richard – Currently our method of control for Boxthorn is to cut and paint.

   Chris – Queried the access for landowners at Skippens Lane.

   Richard – CNA owns the land surrounding this lane and will therefore assume maintenance accountability. We are also reviewing maintenance accountability of Belgrave Rd (between Dorset Rd and Castlerock Rd).

7. **Environmental Update – see presentation**

   Leah confirmed that the air quality isopleths are compiled from MTP, Bengalla mine and Mount Arthur mines data.

8. External Relations Update

Jen provided a summary of the Coal & Allied Community Trust III (2005 – 2008) contributions to the community and an overview of the Community Engagement Programme currently in development, including the recent opening of the Singleton Shopfront.

CCC Members were asked for their feedback on the reporting format of the RTCA Sustainable Development Report for consideration in preparing the 2008 report. Craig Flemming referred to the 2007 SD report and enquired about the 'Clermont Preferred Futures' project supported by RTCA, QLD.

***Action**: Jen to provide further information on the 'Clermont Preferred Futures' project to Craig.*

9. Tour of HVO

Rehabilitation of Alluvial Lands

BACKGROUND

The Development Consent for Hunter Valley Mine, granted 13 May 1993, enabled the mining of 34m tonnes of coal in Authorisation 436, a 165 ha parcel of land adjacent to the Hunter River.

Within the rehabilitation of the whole area proposed to be mined the Consent required the reinstatement of 38% ie 62.7 ha to Class 1 & 2 lands and the remainder of the area to Class 4 (as per the SCS Land Capability Classification System). Demonstration of the achievement of the Class 1 & 2 area capability was required by growing a Lucerne crop and achieving district average production levels of hay for 3 consecutive years – nominated at 15 tonnes/ ha / year. Only 28 % (46.2 ha) of the original area was considered Class 1 & 2 capability with various other capability classes ranging up to Class 8.

The other major Consent requirement was the construction of a levee bank and bentonite wall between the mining operation and the Hunter River to protect the mine from influxes of ground water from the River and to ensure that Mine is able to manage the ground water within the operations.

CLASS 1 & 2 LANDS

Approx 1.06 million m^3 of topsoil and subsoil was salvaged from the original landscape and stockpiled away from the mining operation in 1993 /94. The topsoil stockpiles have occupied an area of approx 46 ha.

Prior to reinstatement the methodology was successfully demonstrated over a 3-year period by way of a trial block.

Completion of the reinstatement of approx 63 ha of Class 1 & 2 lands required:

- 252,000 m^3 topsoil at 0.4m deep
- 630,000 m^3 of subsoil at 1m deep

on to a, basement constructed 1.4m below the designed surface level. The finished tolerance required by the DMR is + or – 0.5m from plan.

The only difference between Class 1 & 2 lands is that the Class 2 lands have a low grade where Class 1 land does not.

Of the 63 ha of reinstated land approx 53 ha can be irrigated.

The irrigation system is a 'Bauer' relocatable centre pivot with a pump system capable of 6.5 mm water in a15 hour circle. The centre pivot irrigation system is currently considered best irrigation practice given it is the most efficient irrigation system regarding water delivered to the crop and minimum extraction needs from the Hunter River. The wheels are driven by electric motors powered by a portable generator.

The Lucerne varieties planted are Aurora (winter active) and Pioneer. These are planted at 20 kg / ha with 250 kg of Superphosphate + zinc blend.

Close coordination has been maintained with the various Government Departments:

- DIPNR for the use of the various soil types, land classes and reinstatement methodology
- NSW AGRICULTURE regarding Lucerne species, productivity measurement and agronomic practices
- DMR for reinstatement techniques and outcomes and adherence to MOP requirements

LEVEE BANK

The constructed levee bank is approximately 4 kilometres long and capable of withstanding a 1:100 year flood in the Hunter River with a 1 m freeboard. Construction was completed in 1994 with the average bank height around 4 – 5 m.

A bentonite "key" was constructed inside, and below ground level, of the levee bank to a depth of up to 20 m and 0.8 m wide. The clay core has prevented:

- The ingress of groundwater from the Hunter alluvium during mining operations and
- The egress of potentially saline water from the rehabilitated lands until mining has ceased and the ground water quality is acceptable.

At the completion of mining and at the appropriate time sections of the levee bank will be removed to reinstate a natural flow through of both surface and ground water.

Forestry Trial

- Forests NSW (FNSW) has been engaged by CNA as an independent contractor to establish a hardwood plantation of approximately 80 hectares on cleared mining buffer lands adjacent to the Old Howick Mine, located approximately 17 kilometres south of Muswellbrook. The land forms part of Coal & Allied's Hunter Valley Operations.

- Site preparation commenced in August 2007 with the preparation of planting beds using a tracked bulldozer drawing a forestry plough. Rows were ripped to a depth of 600mm to aid root penetration and cultivated to a width of 2m with large discs to break up compacted soil. Cultivation lines were spaced 4m apart and set out at slopes of 1 to 3 degrees to minimise soil erosion. Site Preparation was completed in early September 2007.

- Planting was split into two stages. Stage one planting occurred in late November on a full soil moisture profile after good rains in late October in early November 2007. The second stage planting commenced on 1 May 2008 and was completed by 5 May 2008 following good rain in late April. All Planting was carried out by hand crews using planting shovels. Trees were planted in the centre of the rows at 2.5metre spacing to give an overall stocking of 1,000 stems per hectare.

- The plantation comprises two research sites. A 2.2 hectare 'establishment techniques' research trial, using *Corymbia maculate* (Spotted Gum) and a 1.2 hectare 'progeny trial' of *E.longirostrata* (Grey Gum). Both trials were established in November 2007.

This 'establishment techniques' trial is designed to test four site preparation techniques ranging from shallow ripping alone to deep ripping plus mounding, combined with herbicide application or nil herbicide (8 treatments). Survival and growth have been excellent due to high summer rainfall and mild temperatures since planting.

The 'progeny trial' is one of a series which is designed to test the performance of a range of seedlots of the species in different environments. *E. longirostrata* is a species that FNSW has been trialling for several years in lower rainfall areas and have found it to have excellent survival and high wood density. Assessment of the trial in February 2008 revealed 98%survival. FNSW will seek to visit the progeny site periodically (every 2-3 years) to monitor growth rates. There is potential for thinning the site in the future to the best seed lots and generating a modest income stream through sale of improved seed lots, adapted for the Hunter.

10. Proposed dates for 2009

Meet 3 times per year - 1pm, first Tuesday of the month.

5 March, 2 July, 5 November 2009

11. General Business

Chris Council is currently undertaking a review of the CCCs in the shire and will be asking all committee members to re-nominate. Further information will be provided to members by the council.

12. Next Meeting: 5 March 2009 at 1.00pm at the Mount Pleasant office, Muswellbrook.

13. Meeting Closed: 5.00pm.