

Notice of Extraordinary Council meeting

DATE	Wednesday, 20 November 2019
VENUE	Rous County Council Administration Office Level 4, 218-232 Molesworth Street, Lismore
MEETING	1.00pm
LUNCH	12.30pm

Agenda

1. Opening of the meeting

2. Acknowledgement of Country

Council would like to show its respect and acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the Land, of Elders past and present, on which this meeting takes place.

3. Apologies

4. Disclosure of Interest

5. General Manager report

i). Drought management - Level 1 water restrictions..... 1-2

6. Close of business



Phillip Rudd
General Manager

Drought management - Level 1 water restrictions

(1158/18)

Business activity priority

Strategy and Planning

Goal 2

Align strategic direction to core functions and sustainability

Recommendation

That Council:

1. Impose Level 1 water restrictions once Rocky Creek Dam falls to 70% of capacity, given the current water storage levels and the mid-term weather forecast.
2. Authorise the allocation of \$30,000 to cover the likely costs of imposing water restrictions for the 2019/20 financial year.

Background

At the August 2016 meeting of Council, the regional Drought Management Plan was adopted. The Plan documents the regional restriction regime that applies to all customers served by the Rous County Council (RCC) regional water supply.

The water restriction triggers contained within the Plan are based on the RCC system (i.e. Rocky Creek Dam storage level). Typically, Level 1 water restrictions are imposed when Rocky Creek Dam reaches 60% of capacity. However, the Plan does contain provisions for imposing earlier water restrictions should the need arise.

Level 2 restrictions are typically implemented at a Rocky Creek Dam level of 45%. However, if the target demand reduction of 5% is not achieved with Level 1 restrictions, Level 2 can be brought in earlier.

The local water supplies managed by the constituent councils in the region (for Mullumbimby, Wardell, Nimbin and Casino) have adopted localised triggers for the introduction of water restrictions for their specific water sources or storages. Water restrictions, as of 15 November 2019, are in place for these local supplies as detailed below:

- Mullumbimby - Level 3
- Casino - Level 3

In the past water restrictions have been an effective tool in slowing the rate at which water storage levels drop, allowing more time to implement alternative supply options as required. Leading up to the introduction of restrictions and during their implementation, restrictions will be actively supported by an operational readiness plan and a communication plan.

Throughout the last few months, RCC staff have received a consistent level of enquiries from the community as to the need for bringing in water level restrictions to reflect the current climate situation.

Governance

Finance

The requested funds of \$30,000 are available in Council's 'bulk water – assets and program' reserve. The recommendation is supported. Any unspent funds at the end of the financial year will be transferred back to this reserve.

Staff will monitor any impact on retail sales as a result of implementation of restrictions.

Environment

As at 15 November 2019, Rocky Creek Dam is at 77.2% and has been declining more rapidly than normal through October and November. This is due to a combination of increased consumption and reduced inflows into the dam.

Daily water consumption through the RCC network increased by 23% during October 2019, in comparison to 2018 and to date November 2019 has seen an increase of more than 17% on 2018 consumption figures. Average daily consumption for November 2019 is more than 40 million litres compared to the 2018 figure of 33 million litres.

Since late September 2019 inflows into the Dam have been half of what they were in 2018.

Based on current and forecast consumption and inflows, it is very likely that Level 1 water restrictions will be imposed in either late January 2020 based on the 60% trigger level.

For our region, the Australian Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) is forecasting a drier than average Summer with above average daytime temperatures. Whilst the current forecasts are for conditions to ease, the BOM is predicting that there is only a 25% to 30% chance for above average rainfall over the catchment for the next 3 months.

Legal

The *Local Government Act 1993* confer power on Council to manage and operate water supply facilities. These powers also provide Council the ability to restrict use of water and prevent waste or misuse of water.

Given the current climatic conditions, and water restrictions that are already in effect for local water supply systems in the region, it is considered prudent to impose water restrictions earlier than planned to preserve water storages should weather conditions remain unchanged.

Consultation

Rous staff have consulted with representatives from the constituent councils concerning the decision to impose Level 1 water restrictions earlier than nominated by the regional Drought Management Plan. All constituent councils have advised of their support to impose Level 1 water restrictions when Rocky Creek Dam reaches 70%. The Regional Water Liaison Committee (made up of RCC and constituent council staff) will meet later in November 2019, and then regularly as dam levels drop.

In accordance with the Drought Management Plan, when the drought ends and Rocky Creek Dam levels return to 60%, we will review the Plan and its implementation.

Conclusion

The current forecast is for a drier than average summer with below average rainfall. To preserve current declining water storage levels and reduce water demands, it is recommended that Council imposes Level 1 water restrictions once Rocky Creek Dam falls to 70% of capacity, noting that Level 2 restrictions will be brought in when Rocky Creek Dam level is 45% or if a 5% reduction in demand is not achieved, whichever occurs first.



Phillip Rudd
General Manager