



Thursday, 11 December 2014

Landholders in the Great Artesian Basin Eastern Recharge Groundwater Source need to be aware of the potential for reduced access

Acting Deputy Director General, Water, Michael Bullen today advised water users and landholders in the *Eastern Recharge Groundwater Source of the Great Artesian Basin (GAB)* of the potential for reduced allocations in the future.

Mr Bullen said that as current extraction is now close to the water sharing plan limit, water sales in the area could result in the plan limit being breached.

“Should this lead to a growth in long term extraction in the water source, future available water determinations (AWDs) or allocations may have to be reduced,” he said.

“Currently the total licensed entitlement is approximately 35000 megalitres per year which exceeds the plan limit by some 20000 megalitres per year,

“However water drawn from this part of the GAB is subject to a *Long Term Average Annual Extraction Limit (LTAAEL)* of 13300ML/year.”

Mr Bullen said that increased activation of water entitlements in this groundwater source which results in growth over the LTAAEL, has the potential to breach the plan limit and trigger a reduction in available water allocations.

The *Water Sharing Plan for the NSW Great Artesian Basin Groundwater Sources* was amended in February 2014 to provide greater flexibility around compliance with the plan limit and thus reducing the likelihood of a breach in the plan limit unless long term growth in extraction is detected.

This amendment specified that if “*extractions estimated over 5 years exceeded the plan limit by more than 10 percent then future available water determinations (allocations) would be reduced.*”

Under the original rules of the water sharing plan extractions were to be averaged over 3 years with a tolerance of 5 percent.

Whilst these changes to the Plan mean that the AWDs for the next 5 years will most likely remain at 1 megalitre/unit share, it is still possible for the plan limit to be breached and future AWDs to be reduced.

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“Any sale of water entitlement in the eastern recharge zone may increase the potential for this outcome to occur.

Mr Bullen said that landholders should be aware of the potential for future water allocations to be reduced to maintain compliance with the plan limit, should growth in extraction over the long term exceed the new 10 percent tolerance.

ENDS

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