



Media release

26 May, 2015

Mine expansion would pump 35 tonnes of salt into Sydney's drinking water every day

Scientists and conservationist are calling on the Planning Assessment Commission (PAC) to reject the expansion of a longwall coal mine near Lithgow because it would pump millions of litres of salty water into Sydney's water supply and drain endangered swamps.

The PAC will conduct public hearings tomorrow (Wednesday, May 27) into Centennial Coal's proposed expansion of its Springvale longwall, which water quality expert **Dr Ian Wright** says would increase water salinity in Sydney's main water storages by 6 per cent.

The project would also significantly damage numerous nationally endangered swamps on the Newnes Plateau, according to sandstone geology specialist **Dr Ann Young**.

Dr Young said: "My major concern is the hanging swamps will suffer severe impact from mine subsidence. The environmental assessment does not consider these swamps in any detail. Also, the shrub swamps we know will be drained. So both these kinds of nationally endangered swamps will suffer major damage."

University of Western Sydney lecturer Dr Ian Wright said: "Springvale coal mine produces and releases large volumes of poorly treated waste water contaminated by salt, metals and nutrients. It is a major source of water pollution and stress to aquatic ecosystems in the Upper Cocks River, much to the frustration of the Environment Protection Authority. Springvale's own modelling indicates an expansion of the coal mine could increase salinity in Sydney's main water reservoir, Lake Burragorang and Warragamba Dam, by up to 6 per cent."

Colong Foundation for Wilderness director Keith Muir said: "The Cocks River needs to be cleaned up and not degraded. Springvale's proposal to dump 20 to 35 tonnes of salt in the Cocks River each day will have a devastating effect on this river downstream within Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area."

Lithgow Environment Group Vice President Chris Jonkers said: "LEG believes it is entirely feasible and in the state and national interest to modify the proposed mine plan to retain the coal

underneath Newnes State Forest to protect these nationally endangered swamps and associated groundwater-dependant ecosystems.”

Blue Mountains Conservation Society Senior Vice President Tara Cameron said:

“The Springvale projects should be rejected because they do not protect nationally endangered swamps or pristine Carne Creek from mining damage.”

Nature Conservation Council Campaigns Director Daisy Barham said: “The proposal poses a significant risk to the health of the Coxs River and ignores the objections of the Environment Protection Authority. Sydneysiders would be horrified if they knew that tonnes of saline mine water were being discharged into the city’s water supply each day. The company not only refuses to reduce the pollution, it is demanding to substantially increase discharges under this new proposal.”

PLANNING ASSESSMENT COMMISSION HEARING

When: 9.15 am Wednesday, 27 May 2015

Where: The Lithgow Workman’s Club, 3-7 Tank Street, Lithgow

<http://www.pac.nsw.gov.au/Projects/tabid/77/ctl/viewreview/mid/462/pac/470/view/readonly/myctl/rev/Default.aspx>

BACKGROUND

- Springvale mine is an underground coal mine 15km northwest of Lithgow that supplies thermal coal to Mt Piper Power Station.
- Approval for a mine producing 4.5 million tonnes a year was granted in 1992. It began operating in 1995.
- The current consent expires in September 2015. The new application would permit the company to continue to extract 4.5 million tonnes a year for another 13 years.
- The PAC is currently reviewing a Planning Department’s recommendation that the project be approved.

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MORE INFORMATION

Planning Assessment Commission public hearing details:

<http://www.pac.nsw.gov.au/Projects/tabid/77/ctl/viewreview/mid/462/pac/470/view/readonly/myctl/rev/Default.aspx>

Springvale Colliery EIS:

http://majorprojects.planning.nsw.gov.au/page/development-categories/mining--petroleum---extractive-industries/mining/?action=view_job&job_id=5594