

# Minutes

## Minutes of the Tweed Coast and Waterways Advisory Committee Meeting held Wednesday 11 October 2023

### Venue:

South Sea Islander Room, Tweed Heads Administration Office

### Time:

9.00am

### Present:

Rhonda James (Chair), Cr Chris Cherry (Mayor), Cr Nola Firth, Tom Alletson, Peter Comerford, Dan Ware, Grahame McIlveen, Lindy Smith, Jonathan Yantsch, Larry Woodland, Brian Bycroft, Sam Dawson, Lindy Smith, David Cranwell, Jordan Vickers, Frances Smith-Wright (Minutes).

### Apologies:

Scott Benitez Hetherington, Eli Szandala, Jane Lofthouse, Robert Quirk, Ben Fitzgibbon, Adam Andrewartha, Ian Berger, Carl Cormack, Joanna Gardener.

### Acknowledgement of the Bundjalung Nation

### Minutes of Previous Meeting:

**Moved:** Cr Nola Firth

**Seconded:** David Cranwell

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Tweed Coast and Waterways Advisory held Committee meeting held Wednesday 9 August 2023 be accepted as a true and accurate record of the proceedings of that meeting.

### Business Arising:

#### **BA1. Funding of post flood, river and natural environment rehabilitation**

Cr Cherry requested a copy of letters sent to Janelle Saffin and others related to funding of post flood, river and natural environment rehabilitation.

### Agenda Items:

#### **A1. Tweed Shire Council Project Updates**

##### **A1.1 Hastings Point Headland Management Plan**

Hastings Point Headland Management Plan survey closed at the end of June. Key findings from the survey were: car parking areas, upgrading amenities and concerns with overcrowding and environmental damage.

Consultants (8LA) have commenced work on the project. The site analysis is 50% complete, and meetings held with key Council staff. The project team are working on arranging an on-site meeting with Council's Aboriginal Advisory Committee. The draft Management Plan will be finished early 2024. Jordan confirmed that the Hastings Point Management Plan integrates with, and will give effect to, other strategies and plans developed for the area including the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Management Plan.

## **A1.2 Coastal Management Program – hazard assessments**

Stage 2 of the Coastal Management Program (CMP) is in progress.

A community values survey is currently in circulation and closes on 31 October. Focus groups will then be formed to work on issues and solutions and will be arranged by late November. The focus groups will consist of up to 30 people divided into four groups each discussing a different subject. All resident associations as well as other stakeholders will be contacted to participate in the focus groups.

The consultant is currently working on the coastal hazard study, which will be completed by January 2024, and then reviewed by Department of Planning and Environment. Hazards being considered are coastal and tidal inundation, entrance instability and the interplay of erosion and storm surge within the estuary itself. The technical assessment will go to Council for endorsement but will not be put on exhibition for public comment as it is a technical study. Recommendations for actions to address risks will be developed and subject of public exhibition later in the project.

Jordan confirmed that the Tweed Coast estuaries and coast are included in the CMP, and that references have been made to previous significant studies, and the Tweed Coast Regional Crown Reserve Plan of Management.

## **A1.3 Uki riverbank rehabilitation**

Tom gave an overview of the rehabilitation works at Uki stabilising post-flood erosion. Works are now underway with a total budget of approximately \$600,000 and being delivered with Soil Conservation Services and Local Land Services. Work will be complete by the end of year.

## **A1.4 Coast and Estuary Program grant application (Tyngah riverbank rehabilitation)**

Tom gave a summary of the DPE Coast and Estuary Grants Program, noting that applications for 2023 have recently closed. A site opposite Condong Mill on private land has been the subject of the application, with a request for \$263,000. The total project estimate cost is \$395,000. Successful applicants will be advised in December.

## **A2. NSW Agency Project update**

### **A2.1 NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) - Fisheries- Tweed River Shellfish Reef mapping project outcomes**

Mapping of existing oyster reefs has been completed with a total area of 14,354m<sup>2</sup> of natural oyster reef mapped in the Tweed River estuary.

DPI Fisheries staff will assist Council to look at opportunities for expanding oyster reefs in the river, given the associated benefits to estuary water quality and aquatic biodiversity.

**Action:** Tom to send map and oyster reef information to TCWC members.

## **A2.2 NSW Environment Protection Authority - Water Quality Monitoring Project 2022-2024**

The objectives of this project were to investigate the water quality impacts of the floods, and therefore improve our understanding of flood impact and recovery and support local capacity to monitor.

The Tweed River is being used as a case study, given that it has the best data set in the region. The Tweed data set being analysed is comprised of 30 sites with 1080 samples. There are preliminary results available, however full project completion will be June 2024.

**Action:** *Tom to email workshop presentation to committee and request an update on Tweed River water quality based on the work of the project thus far. This is to include an invitation to attend a TCWC meeting to present findings of the work.*

## **A2.3 Department of Primary Industries - Fisheries Coastal Floodplain Prioritisation Study**

The Northern Rivers Floodplain Prioritisation Study reports have been released. The Tweed report identifies and ranks sub-catchment risk for acid sulphate soil, black water and drain vulnerability to sea level rise, and provides long and short-term management options. Tom noted that the Tweed coastal creeks are not currently included in the study.

The study aims to increase stakeholder capacity to make evidence-based flood plain management decisions and to consider opportunities for improved capacity to transition or adapt to sea level rise and improve water quality outcomes. They are not regulatory documents.

Tom presented an overview of a current project which will investigate options for rehabilitation of Council land in the uppermost reach of Blacks Drain. The area is an acid sulphate soil hotspot and degraded wetland. The opportunity exists to do some rehabilitation work at the site.

**Action:** *Tom to send a copy of the Tweed Floodplain prioritisation report to the TCWC and to invite the project manager to come to a future meeting to give an overview.*

**Action:** *Provide link to the reports to Danny Rose and Leon McLean (Roads and Stormwater Unit) and they be invited to the meeting when the report is presented by the project manager.*

## **A3. Story of Acid Sulfate Soils on the Tweed – submission from Lindy Smith**

Lindy presented a summary paper on Acid Sulfate Soils (ASS) in the Tweed. The paper notes early history, research and the benefits of remediation in some areas.

It was stressed that there is a continuing real failure of consideration of Acid Sulfate Soils, particularly as related to development of the wetlands adjacent to Cobaki Broadwater associated with the Tugun Bypass and Gold Coast Airport developments. Years of monitoring of the wetland communities show severe oxidation of soils, including examples from the southeast side of tunnel where pH reduced to 1.43 and the southwest side where pH reduced to 1.85. This has resulted in significant crab mortality.

In 2017 the Instrument Landing System development at the Gold Coast Airport resulted in realignment of tidal channels. To the south, die back of wetland vegetation has occurred and in August 2021 significant crab mortality was observed. The Instrument Landing System went ahead despite detrimental results associated with the Tugun Bypass. Better governance on sensitive areas is needed. The Tugun/ Cobaki group urged the Federal Minister to reconsider the approval.

There is a significant likelihood of future development in the balance of the surrounding areas, including heavy and light rail. It is considered that existing project developers have undertaken minimal and selective monitoring. Overall in NSW, there has been a lot of focus on managing ASS in agricultural land, but this scrutiny has not helped control the ASS impacts on the Cobaki Broadwater. State Environmental Planning Policies have been developed, but in the case of wetlands adjacent to Cobaki Broadwater, have not been upheld.

Tom confirmed that water quality monitoring is being undertaken in Cobaki Broadwater, and that a summary of results from recent years could be provided to the committee. Lindy emphasised that sampling should be done in the first flush as this gives the real picture of what is going on.

To progress this matter, it was agreed that a site inspection including a number of TCWC representatives and Lindy Smith should be arranged. Documentation of observations from the site would be provided to the committee for consideration at its next meeting.

Cr Cherry recognised Robert Quirk's contribution to research and remediation of ASS in the Tweed.

**Action:** *Lindy to send through relevant correspondence to Tom.*

**Action:** *Tom, Jonathan, and Lindy to organise a combined visit to the Cobaki Broadwater wetlands adjacent to the Tweed Pony Club area to make observations.*

#### **A4. Improvements at Dry Dock Road Boat Ramp**

Tom described the current proposal to improve conditions for the public and Sailability at Dry Dock Road boat ramp. Sailability operates out of a container on site. The floating pontoon has a derrick on it that can be used to lift clients into sailing dinghies. They have a client base of 40 people who come on a weekly basis to use the facilities. The safety and ergonomics of the site are not great for either volunteers or clients.

A full upgrade is needed in the area especially for disability access. This would include:

- Revetment on the creek bank and boat ramp.
- New ramp for hand launching of small craft.
- Shoreside facilities including parking and landscaping
- New pontoon
- New fish cleaning table
- Approximate cost \$1,040,000

Council will look at a boating grant from NSW Maritime. Graham mentioned that it would be good to have the pontoon designed to incorporate access for rowing sculls.

## **A5. Actions and scale of implementation required to improve Tweed River water quality**

Councillor Nola Firth posed the question - what do we need to do to improve water quality?

Our annual water quality report shows 65% compliance with overall water quality guidelines. This report distils a vast amount of data from different parameters and sub-catchments to help to communicate to the public an overall view of waterway health. The figure of '65% compliance' is too highly summarised to represent site specific conditions, but it is useful to convey a sense of overall water quality.

In terms of improving/changing water quality, a wet or dry year has more influence than other factors on that year's results. A long time and significant scale of implementation is required to see the results of catchment rehabilitation in water quality improvements.

In terms of the possible actions that can be taken, Council must continue and significantly scale-up floodplain rehabilitation, riparian rehabilitation, creek and riverbank erosion stabilisation and pasture improvement in grazing lands.

### **General Business:**

#### **GB1. Use of boat ramp at Dry Dock Road**

Peter brought up the subject of big dive vessels using the boat ramp at Dry Dock Road, including buses obstructing the carpark. Has Council permission been sought? Does the level of intensity of a business dictate the need for approval?

Tom advised that Council can respond if complaints are sent through from the public. It was also advised that there is a need for better policy on commercial use of the river and Council foreshore facilities. This is an action in the Tweed River Estuary CMP and is being looked at currently by staff.

#### **Next Meeting:**

The next meeting of the Tweed Coast and Waterways Advisory Committee will be held on 13 December 2023.

The meeting closed at 12.00pm.

#### **EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM'S COMMENTS:**

Nil.

#### **EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM'S RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Nil.