

community update

march 2018



Project timeline

- 2009 – Assessment of effluent disposal options
- 2013 – Deep ocean outfall identified as preferred option
- 2017 – AECOM starts working with Council on a concept design and environmental assessment
- Now** – AECOM and Council work with community and stakeholders to develop concept design and prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)
- Submit EIS for approval
- Project approval
- Construction

Merimbula Sewage Treatment Plant and Deep Ocean Outfall

Bega Valley Shire Council and AECOM are continuing our work on this long-term investment that will improve the water quality of our iconic coastal environment, from the beaches to the lakes.

Advice from the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) and the community is the existing beach-face outfall and dunal exfiltration ponds at Merimbula Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) are not sustainable. We are continuing to develop a concept design and environmental assessment for a deep ocean outfall and upgrade of the STP.

In November 2017, we introduced the concept and environmental assessment phase of the project to the community. We did this through drop-in community information sessions and briefing sessions for key stakeholders. These events helped us better understand your concerns so we could incorporate them into the concept design development and ensure they are addressed in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

Project background

Sewage from Merimbula and Pambula is treated at Merimbula STP. The treated sewage, or effluent, needs to be reused or disposed. We reuse as much effluent as possible for irrigation at Pambula Merimbula Golf Course and farmland at Oaklands. The remaining effluent is disposed using either the:

- dunal-exfiltration ponds
- beach-face outfall.

The beach-face outfall and dunal exfiltration ponds have caused community concern around their impact on the aquatic environment and public health. The EPA required Council to investigate better disposal options. To do this, Council, state government agencies and a community focus group reviewed a full range of options before agreeing a deep ocean outfall is the preferred effluent disposal option.

Concept design

To develop a concept design we need to select:

- an option for upgrading the STP
- an alignment for the deep ocean outfall.

The Community Working Group (CWG) will help us assess and select the best options for these two parts of the project. Before we can assess and select options we have to develop them. To do this, we need to better understand both parts of the bay: the water in it and the ground below it.

For the ground below, we are studying above and below the seabed. Looking below the seabed allows us to understand construction challenges while looking above the seabed allows us to map formations like rocky reefs.

For the water in the bay, we have done two dye dispersion tests to allow our designers to understand how waterborne materials travel and spread in the bay's currents. We did our first test in August 2017 and one in this month. By testing at different times of year and at different depths and locations, we can get a complete picture of how currents behave in different water temperatures and depths.

We'll keep studying the STP and the bay to ensure we develop the best possible upgrade and alignment options for the CWG to assess.

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

The EIS will look at all the social, economic and environmental impacts of the construction and operation of the project. To identify the impacts and mitigation measures, we need to do studies around the current environment.

For example, in September 2017, we did a flora (plant) and fauna (animal) study. Over several days, we looked for different plants and animals in the area between the STP and Merimbula Bay. This information documented the area's biodiversity, which is the presence of specific groups of plants and animals. We looked for the presence of species in a few different ways including:

- direct observations like seeing a species or hearing a call
- indirect observations like seeing habitats, hair or tracks.

We are continuing these studies to prepare the EIS. The EIS will allow Council to seek project approval. After approval, Council will be able to secure funding for detailed design and construction.

Community Working Group (CWG)

The CWG is made up of local community members who are working with the project team to assess and select the options for upgrading the STP and an alignment for the deep ocean outfall. They are doing this using your feedback.

They first met in December 2017 to agree on the assessment process. This month they visited the STP to better understand the plant's current condition. They'll meet again later this month to start picking criteria to assess the possible location of the ocean outfall.

Community consultation

As we continue our work, we'll have more drop-in community information sessions and briefing sessions for key stakeholders. At these sessions we'll be able to give you more detail on the investigations we've done and the progress of the CWG.

You can contact the project team with questions or comments anytime using the contact details at the bottom of this newsletter.



For more information visit our website at begavalley.nsw.gov.au/MerimbulaSTPupgrade or email merimbulaSTPupgrade@begavalley.nsw.gov.au

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If you have any questions about this newsletter please call 1800 317 028