

Mt Arthur Coal COMMUNITY CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of Meeting (19)

Location: Mt Arthur Coal Boardroom

Date: Wednesday 2 November 2011

Present: Martin Rush (MR) Chairperson, Jennifer Lecky (JL) Deputy Chairperson, Craig Flemming (CF) Muswellbrook Shire Council, Bruce MacPherson (BM) Resident, Shelley Masterson (ShM) Mt Arthur Coal, Julie McNaughton (JM) Mt Arthur Coal, Scott Mitchell (SM) Mt Arthur Coal, Graham Guest (GG) Resident, Rebecca Smith (RS) Mt Arthur Coal.

Apologies: John Bancroft (JB) Resident, Donna McLaughlin (DM) Mt Arthur Coal.

Meeting Commenced: 4:08pm

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

MR welcomed everyone to the Mt Arthur Coal Community Consultative Committee (CCC) Extraordinary meeting and apologies were received.

2. HOUSEKEEPING AND SAFETY

JM provided information on general housekeeping and safety at Mt Arthur Coal, this included:

- Entry/Exit
- Emergency Procedure
- Muster Area
- Amenities
- Tea/Coffee

3. DECLARATION OF PECUNIARY INTEREST

No pecuniary interests were declared.

4. DISCUSSION – REHABILITATION MANAGEMENT PLAN TABLE OF CONTENTS

JM gave an overview of the intended scope of the meeting.

MR queried what was not included in the Rehabilitation Strategy that was requested?

JM responded that from her recollection the only major request not included was final void management. SM confirmed.

Final Voids

MR noted that the presence of final voids was an issue as Muswellbrook Shire Council (MSC) policy is to not have final voids. MR would like Mt Arthur Coal to consider this now.

BM noted that all final voids were considered water storages and requested that contours should not all run to voids and should run elsewhere. Landforms be designed to direct water back into creeks and the Hunter River and not into final voids.

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JM assured the CCC that where possible contours are designed to run out of the void catchment areas. Mt Arthur Coal will not make void catchments larger than necessary.

MR noted that MSC policy is that catchments are not altered. The question for the CCC is the depth etc. of the final void as dealt with in the rehabilitation strategy. The issue for the CCC to consider today is how the voids will be managed.

JM noted that the current Project Approval permits final voids and the Rehabilitation Strategy and Management Plan are based on this. If future approvals are sought and granted that do not permit final voids, plans would be required to reflect these changes.

CF suggested that it is the Mt Arthur Coal planners who need to understand that voids are not wanted by the community so that mine design can reflect this.

JM and SM noted that to achieve no final voids would require significant work after the mine closes which would be challenging. Current plans and approvals will retain final voids.

CF noted that Mt Arthur Coal is highlighting that it is planning for more Project Approvals and planning for no voids may be a requirement in the future.

JL noted that Mt Arthur Coal have not provided the tonnes required to fill the voids although the CCC were previously given an estimate on time required to fill them. JL also noted that in a past meeting JB raised the point that current voids on site were used as water storages now.

JM noted that while Mt Arthur Coal was operating these voids will remain as water storages and were a valuable resource.

JM acknowledged that the CCC wanted the Rehabilitation Management Plan to contain more detail and rigour around the management of voids.

Future Use of Disturbed Areas

MR requested that this be changed to "future use of land holdings including disturbed areas", noting that buffer land still needs to interact with the economy and its ability to interact may be compromised by disturbed areas.

Surface Water Management

CF enquired whether this will give estimates of discharge volumes

JM replied that this was not planned to be the case.

CM asked what would be included, and JM responded that the focus would be on how Mt Arthur Coal would segregate water and divert clean water as it operates.

BM enquired whether water would be directed to water courses such as the Hunter River or gullies, and if gully would erosion control be included.

JM responded that all of this could be addressed and that the Rehabilitation Management Plan would refer to the Water Management Plan where appropriate. The focus of the rehabilitation

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Management plan would be on water on rehabilitation areas. It will define what Mt Arthur Coal are going to do and where so that enough water is utilised contamination is minimised and other water flows clean off-site.

Characterisation of Soils and Overburden

MR asked if this could include soil amelioration.

JM responded that this would be addressed elsewhere and that this section would be focussed only on soil characterisation in order to determine where it could appropriately be used.

BM noted that soil amelioration takes years to complete.

JM agreed and noted that Mt Arthur Coal's responsibility did not end with the life of the mine.

BM explained some of the difficulties in managing soil pH with chemicals.

Revegetation

JM noted that this would be a significant component of the Rehabilitation Management Plan.

MR requested that timing be included in this section. MR also requested that the use of aerial seeding as a temporary measure be included. MR noted that there is a 10:1 ratio of land disturbance in the shire and MSC would like to equalise this as soon as possible.

JM noted that the achievement of final height is a great catalyst for equalisation of land disturbance.

MR questioned whether some areas could be rehabilitated sooner.

CM noted that functional environments are not always aesthetically pleasing.

MR noted that there must be elements that can be rehabilitated sooner. The Rehabilitation Management Plan should provide certainty to what the community can expect and that an expected schedule is important.

BM noted that the current land management plan required a cover crop to be planted on overburden emplacement areas which will be inactive for a period of more than 3 months.

JM noted that aerial seeding is used to address this in areas that are inactive for more than 3 months and less than 2 or 3 years. JM also noted that temporary rehabilitation would be included in the Rehabilitation Management Plan.

Monitoring Program

CM requested that a requirement be included to provide data to MSC in a form that could be easily incorporated into a database.

MR emphasised that it was a statutory requirement for MSC to report this information but it was currently difficult to coordinate the material from a variety of sources.

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CM noted that State of the Environment reporting was required but the scope was determined by the community and to that degree it was a requirement.

MR requested that the title of this section be changed to "Monitoring and Reporting".

JM noted that Mt Arthur Coal does not yet have a clear understanding of what monitoring will look like and further discussion on this may be required.

Rehabilitation Research Program

JM noted that this was a requirement of the Project Approval and would be nominated as a part of the Rehabilitation Management Plan.

CF explained that he had recently attended a best practice forum and noted that he had noted from the research presented that there were not a lot of studies with firm results in the area of rehabilitation.

Performance and Completion Criteria for Offset Strategy

MR noted that this had been dealt with already and he would be interested in the timing of Ramrod Creek.

JM explained that the Biodiversity Management Plan would need to be bedded down first before this area could be addressed.

Implementing Revegetation and Regeneration within Disturbance Areas and Offset Areas

JM questioned whether offset areas belonged here.

MR suggested that this section could be combined with the previous section.

JM noted that offset areas do need work but were not the same as rehabilitation.

Protection of Vegetation and Soil outside Disturbance Areas

JM noted that this included buffer lands. No comments from CCC.

Rehabilitation of Creeks and Drainage Lines

No comment.

Salinity Management

No comment.

Conservation and re-use of Topsoil

No comment.

Pre-clearance Surveys

CF noted that he would like to see soil structure recorded before areas were cleared noting that even if the soil structure cannot be recreated this would still be a useful record.

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Management of Fauna Impacts

JM noted that this would only be as it relates to rehabilitation as this topic would also be covered in the Biodiversity Management Plan.

BM asked whether audits would be included and JM confirmed that this could be addressed.

Landscaping to Manage Visual and Lighting Impacts

No comment.

Seed Collection and Propagation

MR asked whether this would be done at the mine.

JM replied that seeds would be collected on and off site.

SM noted that seed collection was being organised now.

BM questioned whether the seeds would be trees or grasses.

SM confirmed that both would be collected.

MR noted that Diuris Tricolour had been recorded across Thomas Mitchell Drive in an area that would include land owned by Mt Arthur Coal.

SM noted that Diuris Tricolour was also recorded on site.

Habitat Enhancement

MR queried whether this would include koala habitat, since clearing trees precluded this.

JM noted that habitat enhancement was long term, and woodland regeneration is planned.

Threatened Species and Native Grassland

No comment.

Control of Weeds and Feral Pests

No comment.

Management of Grazing and Agriculture on Site

BM expressed concern about pasture being replaced by trees for carbon capture.

JM and SM noted that land owned by Mt Arthur Coal was leased for agricultural purposes.

Controlling Access

JM emphasised importance of this particularly as Mt Arthur Coal move towards closure, for example the restriction of vehicles and hooved animals on the tailings dam and high wall security.

MR enquired about the past plans that Mt Arthur Coal had for security fences around the mine site.

JM responded that plans for this were still ongoing.

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MR noted that he would like the fence concept to come to the CCC.

JM committed to this at the next CCC meeting (Action 1). Following CCC further investigation, as a response to comments raised at the CCC meeting the construction and security fence will commence prior to our next meeting.

Further information regarding the fence construction will be mailed to the CCC.

Bushfire Management

BM raised concerns about the fire risk posed by grass along the verge of Edderton Road, mentioning that he had been told in the past that a fence was to be put along Edderton Road, that the verge would be levelled and that vegetation near the bitumen would be regularly slashed.

JM committed to providing an update next meeting (Action 2).

Risks to Successful Revegetation and Contingency Measures to Manage Risks

No comment

Other Suggestions

CF enquired whether the Rehabilitation Management Plan will set what is going to happen or the process that will be ongoing.

JM responded that much will be process that will be reviewed. JM also suggested that "Success Criteria" be added to the Rehabilitation Management Plan table of contents. In addition, JM emphasised that the Rehabilitation Management Plan will be part of an ongoing growth strategy at Mt Arthur Coal. JM noted that there needs to be a balance between commitments that will be adhered to and the internal procedures that need to be flexible enough to adapt to new circumstances and technologies and research.

BM Questioned whether there was enough topsoil.

SM responded that there currently was but the long term balance could potentially be an issue in the future.

MR raised that enhancement of inconsequential areas, meaning the revegetation of offset areas and the affect on surrounding areas, should be included.

JM noted that this could be addressed under "Protection of vegetation and soil outside disturbance areas".

MR responded that he had assumed that this section referred to onsite but felt that this should also include off site.

MR noted, in relation to bushfire management, that there was 50% land holdings in the shire of which 25% was held by mining companies. Fifteen rural fire brigades, managed and partially funded by MSC were currently across the Muswellbrook shire, sometimes across predominantly mine owned land. Subsequently, it may be a more sustainable idea for industry to implement fire brigades as an industry wide initiative to manage bushfire on mine-owned lands.

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BM noted that the current Bushfire Management Plan had no plan for prescribed burns or fire breaks. BM had put this to Mt Arthur Coal in the past but was told that this could not be done because of limitation imposed on the mine.

CF noted that the Rural Fire Act overrules other legislation.

JM noted that Mt Arthur Coal does have a rescue squad that fights fires as part of its duties.

SM also noted that the Mt Arthur Coal pit services department and a member of the safety team currently maintain fire breaks around critical infrastructure.

CM noted that domains were not mentioned in the Rehabilitation Management Plan table of contents. CM also suggested that a series of plans with more detail than that given in the Rehabilitation Strategy and at a scale that can be more easily interpreted may be necessary in the Rehabilitation Management Plan. CF noted that plans were not included in current management plans.

JM recognised that the current documents need improvement and the documents currently being prepared will address this.

BM enquired whether the Biodiversity Management Plan would probably be done in-house.

JM responded that the Biodiversity Management Plan would be completed by consultants with Mt Arthur Coal input.

JM invited CCC members to communicate any further issues that came to mind after the meeting.



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Meeting Closed: 5:25 pm

ACTION ITEM NO.	ITEM	ACTIONED BY
1	Include plans for security fence at the next CCC meeting	JM
2	Provide update on management of vegetation along Edderton Road verge next meeting.	JM