

Mr Hall and Ms Bates  
 C/O Michael Brown Planning Strategies  
 PO Box 295  
 Camden NSW 2570

**Ref No: 15WOL\_1510**

15 May 2015

Dear Michael,

**Preliminary agricultural assessment for proposed rezoning at 510 Beach Road, Berry NSW**

Shoalhaven City Council (Council) has requested a pre-gateway agricultural assessment ahead of applying for a planning proposal under the NSW Government Gateway Process for rezoning of 510 Beach Road, Berry (Lot 4 in Deposited Plan (DP) 834245) (herein, the site). This report outlines the objectives, methodology, results and discussion of the agricultural assessment. This assessment was undertaken by Rachel Murray, Senior Environmental Consultant and reviewed by David Bonjer, Senior Environmental Planner of Eco Logical Australia Pty Ltd (ELA).

**Objectives**

The objective of this preliminary agricultural assessment is to consider the potential impact of the proposed rezoning upon agricultural activities and industries within the region to determine whether:

- Large lot residential development of the site would have a significant impact on strategically important agricultural land or important agricultural industries; or
- Large lot residential development would create potential for landuse conflict between new residents and existing or future agricultural uses in the vicinity.

**Rural Planning Context**

The following planning instruments and guidelines provide context for an agricultural assessment of the site.

Document	Relevance to the proposal
S117 Direction 1.2 Rural Zones	The objective of this s117 Direction is ' <i>To protect the agricultural production value of rural land</i> '. The Direction acknowledges that the Director-General will consider changes to rural zoning where consistent with a strategic direction or is of minor significance.
S117 Direction 1.5 Rural Land	The objective of this Direction is ' <i>To protect the agricultural production value of rural land</i> ' and ' <i>To facilitate the orderly and economic development of rural lands for rural and related purposes</i> '. Planning proposals affecting rural lands need to be consistent with the principles for rural subdivision in the <i>Rural Lands State Environmental Planning Policy 2008</i> (Rural Lands SEPP).

Document	Relevance to the proposal
	A planning proposal may be inconsistent with the above, where the proposal is justified by a strategy or is of minor significance.
Rural Land SEPP, 2008	<p>The following principles for rural subdivision are referenced in the s117 Direction 1.5 (Rural Lands).</p> <p><i>The Rural lands SEPP objectives for rural subdivision are:</i></p> <p>(a) <i>the minimisation of rural land fragmentation,</i></p> <p>(b) <i>the minimisation of rural land use conflicts, particularly between residential land uses and other rural land uses,</i></p> <p>(c) <i>the consideration of the nature of existing agricultural holdings and the existing and planned future supply of rural residential land when considering lot sizes for rural lands,</i></p> <p>(d) <i>the consideration of the natural and physical constraints and opportunities of land,</i></p> <p>(e) <i>ensuring that planning for dwelling opportunities takes account of those constraints.</i></p>
Mining SEPP	Although not related to residential development, the <i>State Environmental Planning Policy (Mining, Petroleum Production and Extractive Industries) 2007</i> (Mining SEPP) provides assessment processes for mining development that may impact on Biophysical Strategic Agricultural Land (BSAL). A small section of the site contains BSAL.

## Description of site

Within the Shoalhaven Local Government Area (LGA), agriculture is one of the major industries that contribute to the economic growth of the region. Within the agricultural industry of the region, cattle grazing is the dominant form of agriculture (IRIS, 2013).

Historically, the site operated as a dairy, however, these operations have now ceased. The site is currently grazed by cattle. The lands have been described as rolling grazing land (Cowman Stoddart, 1994). Previous studies carried out for earlier rezoning applications assessed the land capability of the site, as well as the adjacent lots. The results of the studies showed that soils are moderately acidic and low in Electrical Conductivity (EC) (Morse McVey & Associates, 1994) consistent with the definition of BSAL. The site exhibited a high ability to retain nutrients and maintain ground cover. Whilst this suggests the land is suitable for agriculture, the report also concluded that the land is suitable for rural residential development (Morse McVey & Associates, 1994).

## Discussion

The issues identified within the NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) *Policy 0-104 Maintaining Land for Agricultural Industries* and *The Farm Subdivision Assessment Guideline* have been used to guide the review of the proposed rezoning against the objectives of each Ministerial Direction. These issues include:

- Land use conflicts and rural land fragmentation
- Protection of natural resources
- Impact of non-agricultural developments on agricultural business and infrastructure
- Impact upon long term social and economic costs and benefits
- Long-term sustainability

### *Land use conflicts and fragmentation*

The site is surrounded on both the eastern and western sides by properties that have been previously rezoned, subdivided and developed for rural residential purposes. Large lot residential development of the site will therefore not create landuse conflict with adjoining landholdings. Nor will it further fragment rural lands as the site is essentially an infill of rural residential development.

### *Protection of natural resources*

Rezoning of the site complements the surrounding land uses of rural residential and the Coomonderry Swamp, and ensures that the growing rural residential nature of housing in the Shoalhaven LGA continues to occur (Shoalhaven City Council, n.d.; Michael Brown Planning Strategies, 2015). The natural resource values of the Coomonderry Swamp will not be directly impacted by the large lot residential development. Protection of natural resources will be achieved through the proposed rezoning of the Coomonderry Swamp to E1 – National Parks and Nature Reserves. The remainder of the lands within the site have been previously cleared for agricultural purposes, however a number of vegetation patches remain or are regenerating. Ecological and riparian constraints are provided by ELA within a separate assessment.

A small portion of the site has been mapped as Biophysical Strategic Agricultural Land (BSAL) which is defined as “land with high quality soil and water resources capable of sustaining high levels of productivity” (NSW Department of Planning and Environment, 2015). The area identified as BSAL consists of two small areas alongside Beach Road (*Strategic Agricultural Land Map – Sheet STA\_042* of Mining SEPP). While these two areas are located on the site, the vast expanse of the BSAL is located to the north and is fragmented by Beach Road.

### *Impact of non-agricultural developments on agricultural business and infrastructure and social / economic benefits and costs*

The population within the Shoalhaven LGA is predicted to continue to grow by approximately 22% by 2036 (forecast.id, n.d.). Given this population growth, there has been an increase in demand for residential developments, and in particular for rural residential lots (Michael Brown Planning Strategies, 2015). In order to ensure the long term sustainability of the region, development of this land will ensure that housing is available for the residents that are relocating to the region.

Growth of industries other than agriculture has occurred within the Shoalhaven LGA, showing that the region is becoming less reliant upon agriculture to contribute to economic growth and development. A number of industries such as manufacturing, retail, public administration and safety have shown strong growth in recent years (Regional Development Australia, 2012). Agriculture contributes approximately \$40 million to the Shoalhaven economy, while Manufacturing generates \$450 million annually (Regional Development Australia, 2012). Manufacturing activities would not be affected by a downturn in agriculture within the Shoalhaven LGA, with activities focussing upon manufacture of paper, chemicals, yachts and clothing.

Approximately 43% (1960 ha) of the land within the Shoalhaven LGA is used for agricultural purposes (profile.id, n.d.). Given the dominance of agriculture as a land use within the Shoalhaven LGA, rezoning of the site (approximately 54.3 ha) of land for rural residential uses is unlikely to impact upon the agricultural industry as the site does not cover a large area. In addition to this, the dairy infrastructure that is present on site is currently not in use. Loss of this infrastructure through the proposed rezoning will not impact upon the dairy industry as this infrastructure has not contributed to the industry for a number of years.

### *Long term sustainability*

The site has suitable soils for grazing, however the small size of the site is such that it is unlikely to ever provide a significant economically viable agricultural enterprise.

### **Conclusions**

This assessment has shown that the Planning Proposal would not result in a significant loss of Biophysically Strategic Agricultural Land (BSAL), nor would it lead to landuse conflicts with neighbouring properties as those properties have already been developed as large lot developments.

Given the dominance of the agricultural industry within the Shoalhaven LGA and the growth of new industries within the region, rezoning of the site is not expected to have an impact upon the agricultural production value of rural land or BSAL. The land subject to this assessment is currently not operating as a working dairy and land suitable for cattle grazing is plentiful in the local area. Therefore, loss of this land to rural residential purposes will not result in an impact to the agricultural industry.

Rezoning will allow further economic growth and improvement of environmental values within the region through provision of housing for new residents to the region, creation of new jobs and protection of environmental resources through proposed dedication of the Coomonderry Swamp for environmental protection. The proposed rezoning complements the existing developments in surrounding areas thus contributing to the orderly development of rural lands.

If you have any questions regarding this assessment, please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned.

Yours sincerely,



**Robyn Johnson**

**Senior Environmental Scientist**

T +61 4201 2205 | E: [robynj@ecoaus.com.au](mailto:robynj@ecoaus.com.au)

## References

Cowman Stoddart, 1994. *Environmental Planning Assessment and Application for Rezoning*. Cameron Stoddart Pty Ltd, Nowra.

Forecast.id n.d. *Population Forecasts, Shoalhaven City*. Available from: <http://forecast.id.com.au/shoalhaven/home> [7 May 2015].

Michael Brown Planning Strategies, 2015. *Submission to Shoalhaven City Council – Planning Proposal: Land Situated at Lot 4 DP 834245 No 510 Beach Road, Berry Prepared for the Hall Family*. Michael Brown Planning Strategies, Camden.

profile.id n.d. *About the profile areas, Shoalhaven City*. Available from: <http://profile.id.com.au/shoalhaven/about> [7 May 2015].

Regional Development Australia, 2012. *Shoalhaven Area Profile*. Government of Australia. Available from: <http://www.rdafsc.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Shoalhaven.pdf> [7 May 2015].

IRIS Research, 2013. *Shoalhaven Regional Statistics*. Available from: <http://www.iris.org.au/index.pl?page=224> [7 May 2015].

Shoalhaven City Council, n.d. *Fact Sheet 7 – Rural Zones*. Available from: [http://slep2013.shoalhaven.nsw.gov.au/sites/slep2013.shoalhaven.nsw.gov.au/files/fact\\_sheet\\_7\\_rural\\_zones\\_-\\_revised.pdf](http://slep2013.shoalhaven.nsw.gov.au/sites/slep2013.shoalhaven.nsw.gov.au/files/fact_sheet_7_rural_zones_-_revised.pdf) [7 May 2015].