

Fact Sheet

30 June 2011

Loddon Highlands WSPA

The Loddon Highlands Water Supply Protection Area (WSPA) was declared in June 2010. The area extends from Newlyn, Learmonth and Waubra in the south to Maryborough and Dunolly in the north and includes the former Spring Hill and Upper Loddon WSPAs.

A groundwater management plan is being drafted for the area, during which time the area is operating under the Loddon Highlands WSPA interim management rules.

Allocations

All zones were allocated 100% for season 2010/11, except for Forest Hill Zone 1003. Groundwater licence holders in the Forest Hill Zone received an initial allocation of 65%, which increased to 80% in January 2011 in response to significant aquifer recharge (Figure 1).

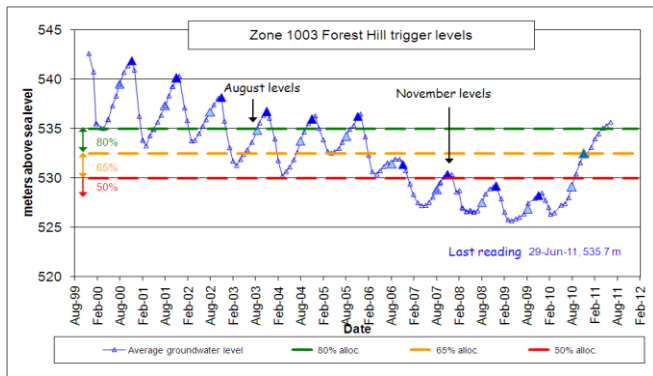


Figure 1 Forest Hill Zone trigger levels.

Carryover

Last season licence holders in the former Spring Hill WSPA were among the first in Victoria to be eligible to use groundwater carryover. The introduction of carryover provides licence holders with greater flexibility to manage their entitlement. Carryover is not available to licence holders if allocations are

100% of entitlement in all zones.

Groundwater use

Groundwater use was significantly lower than recent seasons due to high summer rainfall. Total metered usage was 1,704 ML, which is 9% of licensed volume (Figure 2).

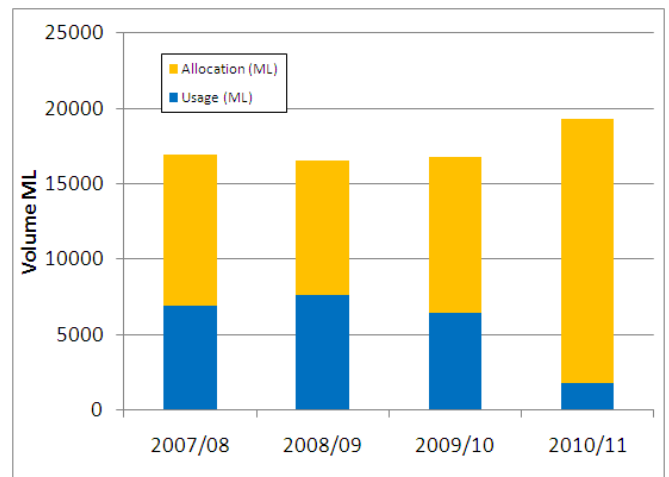


Figure 2 Metered groundwater extraction

Trading

Temporary trading of groundwater entitlement is available to licence holders in the Loddon Highlands WSPA, however permanent transfers are not permitted under the interim management rules. Last season 1,366 ML of temporary transfers occurred.

Groundwater levels

G-MW in conjunction with the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) continues to monitor groundwater levels in more than seventy observation bores in the Loddon Highlands WSPA (Figure 3 – 5).

Groundwater levels have risen across the area, with levels rising by 10 m in areas of intensive groundwater development around Newlyn and Ascot.

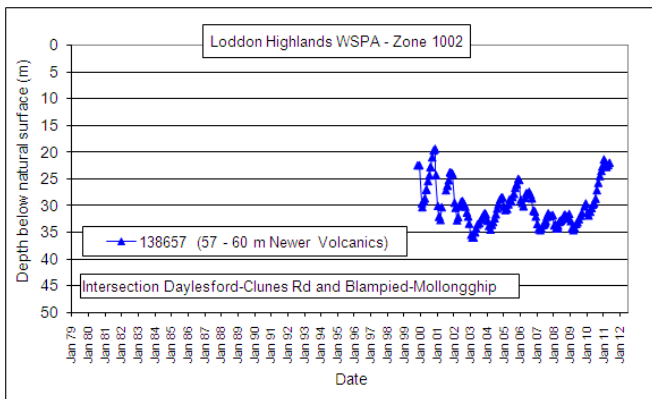


Figure 3 Blampied Zone 1002

Groundwater levels in the basalt and deep lead aquifers are well connected in the Ascot area and show significant response to seasonal pumping.

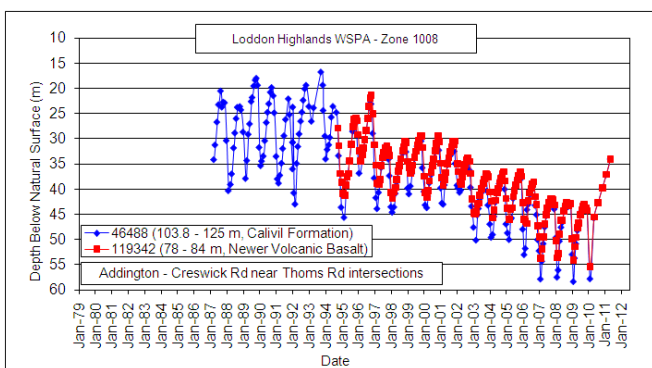


Figure 4 Ascot Zone 1008

Groundwater levels in the Madame Hopkins Deep Lead aquifer have remained steady, with only a small decline in response to the dry conditions between 2000 and 2010.

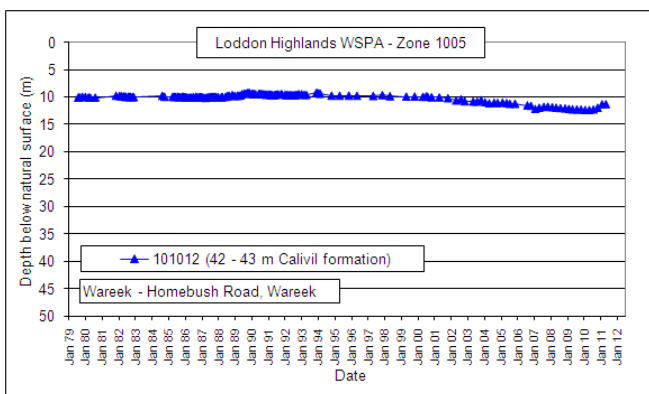


Figure 5 Former unincorporated Zone 1005

Groundwater salinity

Groundwater salinity samples from the new State observation bores recently tested, ranged between 190 and 8,220 EC in the basalt aquifer and between 5 and 2,750 EC in the deep lead aquifer, which are within expected ranges.

Samples from private bores had an average of around 800 EC. Groundwater users are

encouraged to return samples for analysis, upon request, so trends can be better understood.

Moving forward

A consultative committee consisting of local landholders and other stakeholders has been appointed by the Minister for Water to draft a groundwater management plan for the Loddon Highlands WSPA.

The new groundwater management plan will need to consider a range of management issues, including establishing trigger levels and associated seasonal restrictions, arrangements for transfer and carryover of water entitlements, and monitoring and reporting requirements.

A public meeting was recently held in Clunes to provide a summary of the technical knowledge, discuss the management plan process and provide an opportunity for community to have input to the draft plan. A groundwater user survey has also recently been undertaken.



Figure 6 Public meeting at Clunes

The committee is now in the process of drafting management proposals and will hold another public meeting later this year.

The groundwater management plan is expected to be drafted and submitted to the Minister for Water for consideration by April 2012.

Where can I get more information?

The Loddon Highlands WSPA Interim Management Rules and more information on the groundwater management plan process is available from the G-MW website at www.g-mwater.com.au/water-resources/ground-water or call Bob Knowles at G-MW, Tatura on (03) 5833 5437.