



Chairman
Secretary
Catchment Project Officer

: Phil Mellon - 9844 6371
: Pauline Irving - 9844 6006
: Lesley Hart - 9841 0119

WATERSHED **Torbay** ACTION

Torbay Catchment Group
PO Box 1900
ALBANY WA 6331
www.torbay.scrib.org

Robert Atkins
Deputy Director General, Environment
Department of Environment & Conservation
Locked Bag 104
BENTLEY DELIVERY CENTRE WA 6983

Thursday 24th September 2009

Dear Mr Atkins

It has been brought to our attention at a recent Torbay Catchment Group meeting (Wednesday 16th September) that the Water Corporation has recently commenced releasing treated wastewater from the Albany Waste Water Treatment Plant Dam No. 2 into Seven Mile Creek.

The Torbay Catchment Project Officer, Lesley Hart, reported to our community the urgent request the Water Corporation had made to the Department of Water seeking approval for a controlled discharge of treated wastewater containing high levels of both Total Nitrogen and Total Phosphorus for up to 60 days into Seven Mile Creek.

The catchment group was aware that the potential over-flow of the dam had been raised as an issue back in April this year and that at that time, it was understood that both the Department of Water and the Department of Environment and Conservation had not supported any release of nutrient rich wastewater into Seven Mile Creek.

The Torbay Catchment Group would like to know what mitigation strategies if any were applied over the last 4-5 months to try to prevent the need for a discharge? The outcome it seems is that an unacceptably high additional loading of both Nitrogen and Phosphorus is flowing into a creek system that is already suffering from the impact of high nutrient levels (i.e. persistent blue-green algal blooms downstream in Lake Powell).

As a community we are concerned not only with the detrimental impacts of a very high additional nutrient load to the catchment waterways, but also the potential pathogen risks. Of added concern to members of the catchment group is the fact that, to our knowledge, there has been no statement to the media to alert the public to this discharge.

Despite years of research, considerable funding and enormous input by community members and other stakeholders, culminating in the Torbay Catchment Restoration Plan, we are now faced with the prospect of significantly high nutrient loads being dumped into the system over a relatively short time frame. This contravenes one significant action of the Restoration Plan to achieve a reduction of the total catchment nutrient load by 38% for nitrogen and 24% for phosphorus by 2025.

As the leading community group working on implementing the actions of the Torbay Catchment Restoration Plan, the Torbay Catchment Group would like to be informed as to whether or not the current discharge of treated wastewater by the Water Corporation from the Treefarm site

The Torbay Catchment Group's Vision

"An environmentally clean, balanced ecology supporting a prosperous community in which people respect each other's use of the catchment and waterways"

into Seven Mile Creek amounts to a breach of their licence? If so, does the Department of Environment & Conservation intend to prosecute Water Corporation?

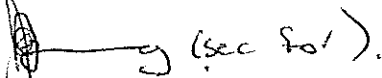
The Torbay Catchment Group has corresponded with Water Corporation on this matter and requested the following from them:

1. What water quality monitoring is the Water Corporation currently undertaking in relation to the discharge?
2. For the discharge to date, what is the average daily volume of water being discharged and what are the levels of Total Nitrogen, Total Phosphorus and *E. Coli* in the discharge?
3. Can the Water Corporation indicate what the expected Total Nitrogen and Total Phosphorus loading will be over the proposed discharge period?

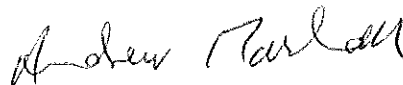
In principle, the members of the Torbay Catchment Group and the wider Torbay community, do not agree with there being any direct discharge of treated wastewater into Seven Mile Creek and we had assumed from past communications that the Water Corporation were managing disposal of the treated wastewater by it's application to the trees on the Treefarm. As such we would strongly support the Department of Environment & Conservation in prosecuting Water Corporation for their actions.

We look forward to receiving your response to our questions and concerns.

Yours sincerely



Phil Mellon
Chair



Andrew Marshall,
Torbay Catchment Group Executive Committee