



Chairman
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Catchment Project Officer

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Sue Murphy
Chief Executive Officer
Water Corporation
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LEEDERVILLE WA 6902

Thursday 24th September 2009

Dear Ms Murphy

It has been brought to our attention at a recent Torbay Catchment Group meeting (Wednesday 16th September) that the Water Corporation has 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 the Department of Water and Department of Environment and Conservation had not supported any release of nutrient rich wastewater into Seven Mile Creek.

What has been done, if anything, to mitigate the need for a discharge over the last 4-5 months? The outcome it seems is that an unacceptably high additional loading of both Nitrogen and Phosphorus is now 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).

In 2003/2004 when the Water Corporation drafted it's Albany Wastewater Disposal Options – Environmental Improvement Initiative, the Torbay Catchment Group back then refused the offer of dollars in exchange for the right to discharge wastewater into the Seven Mile Creek system, believing it to be environmentally undesirable and irresponsible.

As a community we are concerned not only with the detrimental impacts of a very high added nutrient load to the catchment waterways, but also the potential pathogen risks. Of additional 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. It would seem the right and responsible thing for the Water Corporation to do under the circumstances.

In promotional packages that have been distributed in the past to community members on the Albany Wastewater Treatment Plant and land disposal site, a report on the performance of the tree farm by Ken Eade in March 2006 states 'The Water Corporation is proud of the success of the Albany Treefarm and continues to develop innovative and best practice wastewater

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"

management systems' (see attached). So one might well ask, what happened to the program for developing best practice wastewater management systems?

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 of the following:

1. What water quality monitoring the Water Corporation is 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?

We would also like to:

1. Receive copies of any Annual Reports produced in 2007 and 2008 reporting on the water quality monitoring data at the Treefarm and the Gunn Road gauging station site on Seven Mile Creek and any data/reports on the monitoring of the wastewater levels in the two holding dams on the Treefarm site.
2. Know what the Water Corporation will offer the Torbay community by way of compensation or remediation of the negative impact of the discharge.

We enclose a copy of the Torbay Catchment Restoration Plan Summary Report to remind the Water Corporation of what it signed up to and the specific contributions that the Water Corporation agreed to make towards implementation of this Restoration Plan back in 2005.

We look forward to receiving the requested information and your response to our concerns.

Yours sincerely

Phil Mellon
Chair

Andrew Marshall,
Torbay Catchment Group Executive Committee