



History: This message has been replied to and forwarded.

c/o 10 Carra Ave

Douglas Park 2569

26 April 2013

The Chief Scientist
NSW,

Dear Chief Scientist,

I write this submission on behalf of the Rivers SOS Alliance of 50 environmental and community groups around NSW, as a founding member and foremost writer of dozens of our submissions since our formation in 2005.

We are especially concerned at the possibility of CSG extraction in the Special Areas of Sydney's drinking water catchment, but also in the 13 other catchments in NSW, involving important river systems.

We are aware that other groups in our network will be giving detailed descriptions of the dangers of CSG to the environment: of fracking and of depletion of water resources, due to the huge amounts of water needed for the CSG operations, also details on the unsolved problem of disposal of saline waste, the likely failure of bore well structures etc, and we want to add our support for the warnings you will receive. However we will not duplicate these details and this submission will be brief.

In regard to our focus on the Special Areas: these were set up in 1998 in response to the health scares concerning giardia and cryptosporidium in Sydney's water supply. A similar outbreak had caused hundreds of deaths and illnesses in Milwaukee not long before this. The outbreak was deemed to be caused by sewage leaks into the Wollondilly River due to high rainfall. The Special Areas were thus to be preserved as pristine bushland surrounding the storage dams (Warragamba, Nepean, Avon, Cordeaux, Cataract and Woronora). They were to act as a filter to purify water in the lower reaches of the rivers feeding these dams. The Sydney Catchment Authority was set up at the same time to manage the catchments, especially the Special Areas.

Anyone who sets foot in these gated and padlocked areas is liable to be fined up to \$44 000 but, to our alarm, longwall (underground) coal mining has been and is being approved within these supposedly sacrosanct areas. As has been shown in the case of Waratah Rivulet (providing 30% of the flow into the Woronora Dam, which in turn supplies

Sutherland Shire and Northern Illawarra with their drinking water) long wall mining has cracked, polluted and drained this river , within the Schedule One Special Area of the Woronora catchment.

The mine owner, Peabody Energy (the largest privately owned mining company in the world, US based) has recently received approval to expand its mining under the Waratah Rivulet and even under the Woronora Dam itself. Rivers SOS raised funds to undertake a challenge to this plan in the Land and Environment Court in 2010, which we lost and mining goes ahead as we write this.

Also to our dismay an expansion of BHP Billiton's Dendrobium Mine in the Metropolitan Special Area has recently been approved – a mining operation which had already caused the drying up of creeks feeding the Avon and Cordeaux Rivers , and the desiccation of swamps, as well as numerous cliff falls.

The SCA has not got enough legislative power to challenge the degradation of the areas they were set up to protect. The lack of sufficient power was noted by Dr John Williams from the outset. He also carried out the first two catchment audits and noted the cracked creek beds resulting from longwall mining.

The chief scientist with the SCA, Dr Jerzy Jancowski, has written numerous reports on the effects of longwall mining on these river systems , but these sink like stones.

Surely our most important drinking water catchments must be granted adequate protection from this ongoing damage. The SCA estimates that over 90% of the catchments are covered by mining leases going well into the future .

Now we have the added problem of future CSG extraction in these areas . Apex Energy has already received government approval for an exploratory bore near Darkes Forest in the Woronora Special Area.

As said above, we would like you to mandate protection for all drinking water catchments from CSG operations, but Sydney's Special Areas must come first. They supposedly protect and filter the water for 60% of NSW's population – nearly five million in the Greater Sydney Region including Macarthur, the Blue Mountains, the Southern Highlands etc.

CSG operations will obviously add to the degradation and depletion of water already occurring as a result of longwall mining.

If we as a society cannot preserve our Special Areas then there is something very amiss both with our governance and with our general lack of concern . We hope that you can remedy this.

Caroline Graham

Rivers SOS Committee and Southern Coalfield Representative

