

**Paul Freeman - RE: Proposed modification to Werris Creek Coal Mine**

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**From:** Lindsay Fulloon <Lindsay.Fulloon@epa.nsw.gov.au>  
**To:** Paul Freeman <Paul.Freeman@planning.nsw.gov.au>  
**Date:** Monday, 13 August 2012 11:24 AM  
**Subject:** RE: Proposed modification to Werris Creek Coal Mine  
**CC:** Robert O'Hern <Robert.OHern@epa.nsw.gov.au>

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Hi Paul

I have reviewed the s.75W mod application submitted by Whitehaven Coal for the Werris Creek Coal Mine. I don't see any show stoppers from our (EPA – note OEH comments will be provided separately) perspective. However I have raised the following issues directly with Whitehaven following discussions and additional information that has come to light:

1. The EPA is concerned that Werris Creek Coal had not communicated the void water management issues it was dealing with to its Armidale office before submitting the modification application. When EPA received the modification, it came to us with the message that it was urgent because water inundation in the pit was potentially about to interfere with mining operations. Recent experiences with another company following the floods of Nov 2011 and January 2012, and indeed the recent spill from the Werris Creek premises, have heightened community concerns about void water management. EPA expects that its licensees discuss such issues so that mutually agreed plans can be negotiated in a proactive manner to ensure the best possible environmental and operational outcomes are delivered for all the parties involved.

2. The EPA is also concerned that it now appears the two southern void water dam cells were not constructed to their full approved 400ML capacity, and in fact they can only currently hold around 280ML. We also understand that the northern cell is currently empty and that it could potentially therefore be subjected to corrective works to resolve the design capacity issue and ensure it is constructed to specification. If these ponds had been constructed to specification, the spill event that EPA is currently investigating may also have not occurred, and Werris Creek Coal would potentially be able to accommodate the water currently stored within the mine void.

3. The EPA expects that Werris Creek Coal will proactively implement all practicable additional void water management controls (e.g. increased usage options, evaporators, alternative storage, reworking existing storages to ensure they meet design specification, or a combination of these) to cater for contingencies such as significant additional rainfall prior to the completion of the augmented void water dam, or a delayed modification approval.

Kind regards

**Lindsay Fulloon**

Senior Regional Operations Officer | **NSW Environment Protection Authority** |

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**From:** Paul Freeman [mailto:Paul.Freeman@planning.nsw.gov.au]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 8 August 2012 10:25 AM  
**To:** Christie Peter  
**Cc:** Fulloon Lindsay; O'Hern Robert; Stephen O'Donoghue  
**Subject:** Proposed modification to Werris Creek Coal Mine

Hi Pete,

Whitehaven has applied to modify its project approval for the Werris Creek Coal Mine. The application includes:

1. Not constructing its approved void water dam 2, and instead expanding its existing void water dam 1; and
2. Relocating its approved explosive magazine.

A letter from Whitehaven is attached, which explains the proposed modification in terms of the impact on approved biodiversity offset areas (expanding void water dam 1 would remove 6.1 ha of the approved mine site offset).

The Department is seeking comment from OEH with regard to the proposed modification, and in particular whether the proposed compensatory additional offset in the Greenslopes/Banool offset area is adequate. It would be appreciated if you could provide your comment as soon as possible, and at the latest by Friday 17 August 2012.

Please contact me on 9228 6587 if you wish to discuss this matter in more detail.

Kind regards

**Paul Freeman** | Planner

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