

Mr Nick Hearfield
Senior Planning Officer
DPE Planning
Via Major Projects Portal

Re: DPIRD Fisheries comments on the EIS for the proposed Thrumster Wastewater Scheme (SSI-56980459), Port Macquarie-Hastings LGA

Dear Mr Hearfield

I refer to the Planning Portal referral dated 6 August 2024 seeking comments from DPI Fisheries on the EIS for the proposed Thrumster Wastewater Scheme (SSI-56980459), Port Macquarie-Hastings LGA.

DPIRD Fisheries is responsible for ensuring that fish stocks are conserved and that there is “no net loss” of key fish habitats upon which they depend. To achieve this, the Coastal Systems Unit assesses activities under Parts 4 and 5 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* in accordance with the objectives of the *Fisheries Management Act 1994* (FM Act), the aquatic habitat protection and threatened species conservation provisions in Parts 7 and 7A of the FM Act, and the *Policy and Guidelines for Fish Habitat Conservation and Management (2013 Update)* (DPIRD Fisheries P&G). In addition, DPIRD Fisheries is responsible for ensuring the sustainable management of commercial fishing and aquaculture, quality recreational fishing and the continuation of Aboriginal cultural fishing within NSW.

It is understood that the proposal will include the development of the Thrumster Wastewater Scheme which includes a new wastewater treatment plant (WWTP), associated pipelines and infrastructure to service Thrumster, Sancrox, Fernbank Creek and catchment diversions from the Port Macquarie Wastewater Scheme, identified as key areas for future growth in the region. Of particular interest to DPIRD Fisheries is the linear infrastructure that traverses key fish habitats and the operational water quality of discharges and potential impacts on adjacent Priority Oyster Aquaculture Areas (POAAs).

DPIRD Fisheries understands that most areas of key fish habitat that are intersected by the linear infrastructure will be horizontally directionally drilled resulting in minimal impacts to these habitats. Furthermore, the EIS states that no disturbances to mangroves and saltmarsh are expected.

The project has the potential to impact the operation of POAAs via operational water quality impacts from treated discharges to Koolabung Creek and emergency overflow discharges to Partridge Creek and Fernbank Creek. Although the EIS identifies the relevance of the *NSW Sustainable Oyster Aquaculture Strategy 2021* to the project and that, despite the treatment options for the Thrumster WWTP including provision of a higher treatment flow and storm pond storage to provide additional storage and to mitigate potential impact on the oyster growers downstream, the project has the potential for water quality impacts to occur from the operation of the project, the EIS does not appear to include a specific section on likely impacts and mitigation measures to the oyster industry from these potential operational water quality impacts. Given the importance of the oyster aquaculture industry within the Hastings River, DPIRD Fisheries recommends that the EIS is amended to include a specific section on potential impacts of operational water quality impacts to oyster aquaculture operations within the Hastings River.

If you have any queries, please contact me on 02 6626 1375 or jonathan.yantsch@dpi.nsw.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jonathan Yantsch", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jonathan Yantsch
Senior Fisheries Manager, Coastal Systems (North Coast)
Marine Estate Management, DPIRD
Authorised delegate of the Minister for Agriculture