

Queanbeyan Anglers
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Mr Anthony Ko
Planner - Snowy2.0 Main Works
Department of Planning, Industry and Environment
GPO Box 39 Sydney
NSW 2001

Environmental Impact Statement: Snowy 2.0 – Main Works (Project SSI – 9687)

Dear Mr Ko

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS): Snowy 2.0 – Main Works. The Queanbeyan Anglers Club (QAC) has the following comments.

Regional Fishing Offset

QAC supports the proposal by the Monaro Acclimatisation Society for a Regional Fishing Offset to compensate anglers for the risk of Redfin Perch and/or the Epizootic Haematopoietic Necrosis Virus (EHNV) being pumped into Tantangara Dam when Snowy 2.0 becomes operational. Appendix M.2 – Aquatic Ecology Impact Assessment states that there are no threatened species in Tantangara Dam. The dam is recreationally important for salmonids (brown and rainbow trout) which are self-replenishing, that is, the dam is not stocked with trout fingerlings. The trout population is maintained by trout spawning in the streams flowing into the dam (Murrumbidgee River, Nungar Creek and Mosquito Creek).

In the event the controls to prevent the transfer of potential pest species (including Redfin Perch but also eastern gambusia, goldfish and climbing galaxias) from Talbingo Dam to Tantangara Dam fail, the Regional Fishing Offset will assist in managing the impact of the predation on the salmonid population by the Redfin Perch.

QAC also notes that in the operational phase of the Snowy 2.0 project, the pumped hydro operation will enable water from Talbingo Dam to enter the Murrumbidgee River, Snowy

River and Murray River catchments (the catchment includes, for example, Tooma River and the Tumbarumba Creek).

QAC supports the proposed measures during the construction and operational phases of Snowy 2.0 to mitigate risks against the movement of potential pest species in the transfer of water from Talbingo Dam to Tantangara Dam (see Appendix G – Mitigation Measures Table).

Aquatic Ecology and the Construction of Snowy 2.0

QAC is concerned about the impact on aquatic ecology during and after the construction of Snowy 2.0. The potential impact includes the construction of water intakes in Talbingo Dam and Tantangara Dam and associated dredging and blasting works, the placement of excavated rock and dredge material in Talbingo Dam, surface infrastructure and utilities, tunnel dewatering into Talbingo and Tantangara Dams and tunnel excavation and groundwater drawdown and their cumulative impact.

In relation to tunnel excavation, QAC is concerned that the disturbance and interception of aquifers will lead to a flow of groundwater in the aquifers into the tunnel with a negative impact on the habitat of the salmonid species. The EIS notes at 6.5 Appendix M.2 Aquatic Ecology that any inflow of water 'would result in the depressurisation of aquifers and associated reductions in water tables and baseflow in water courses above and adjacent to the tunnel alignment'. Further, a reduction of groundwater might lead to the drying of watercourses and 'a loss of aquatic habitat, associated biota and loss of connectivity upstream of the water loss'. There is no assessment of the impact on the salmonid species as a result of the loss of groundwater for the Tantangara plain. Further research is also needed to factor in the existing damage to the banks of streams by horses on the Tantangara plain and the damage from increased sediment in the streams.

QAC is concerned that reduced surface flow could result in a loss or reduction in the aquatic biota population, the connectivity of the aquatic habitat and changes in water flows could influence biota subject to changes in water flow which might, for example, trigger spawning in high flows or build up sediment over time as a result of less material being transported downstream.

In view of the range of conclusions from the modelling in the EIS (that is, the impact of a loss of groundwater in particular streams, for example, the Yarrangobilly River), QAC recommends that they are reassessed as construction proceeds to document the impact of construction on aquatic ecology and that mitigation measures are adjusted if the conclusions from the modelling are off beam. Waterwatch should be engaged to assist with monitoring water quality in the streams.

QAC is concerned about the rise and fall of water levels in Tantangara Dam which will have an impact on the aquatic environment.

Summary

QAC notes that Snowy 2.0 is a large project and that there is always a risk with a project that there are intended and unintended outcomes. In view of the longevity of the project, the impact is significant on freshwater angling through changed aquatic ecology in water courses and the impoundments. QAC supports the proposed Regional Fishing Offset and recommends that the impact of the project on aquatic ecology is monitored and documented through the life of Snowy 2.0 and mitigation measures are adjusted since the construction and operational activities of the project will affect the 'sensitive aquatic receptors' in Talbingo Dam and Tantangara Dam and catchments.

Queanbeyan Anglers Club