

# **EPA Board Communiqué**

## **November and December 2019**

*Regular Meetings 132 and 133, Tuesday 5 November and 14 November, and Meeting 134, Thursday 5 December 2019*

### **Meeting 132**

#### **Assessment of Tassal's Hamilton Recirculatory Aquaculture System Hatchery**

Tassal proposes to develop and operate a recirculating aquaculture system salmon hatchery near Hamilton. The hatchery would be capable of producing smolt weighing up to 600g. Water will be largely recirculated and treated to remove pollutants, while wastewater, comprising some bleed-off from the recirculating system and water from sludge de-watering will be beneficially used for irrigation on agricultural land.

Eighty-five public representations were received in response to the advertisement of the development, with the major concerns being impacts on Lake Meadowbank, noise from pumps drawing water from Lake Meadowbank and the potential for odours. The Board considered each of the major issues and discussed them, as appropriate, with the EPA's Air Specialist, Water Specialist and Noise Specialist as well as the regulator of several similar aquaculture facilities.

After considerable discussion of the key issues and consideration of the matters raised in representations, the Board agreed on a number of changes that should be made to the draft assessment report and the draft conditions for the Environmental Licence. However, the Board deferred making a decision on the assessment until it had undertaken a site inspection, received further information on several matters and met with an adjacent landowner who had made a substantial representation and was, potentially, the most likely to be affected. The Board agreed to have a special meeting after the site inspection to complete the assessment.

#### **Special Fee Remission – Australian Hualong Comstock Mine**

The Comstock Mine has a long history of mining and generates acid drainage. It was acquired in 2013 by Australian Hualong. The permit for the site requires the ongoing treatment of acid drainage emissions from the site.

Australian Hualong submitted an application for a special fee remission based on the fact that the mine is under care and maintenance. The Board noted that there were a number of non-compliances with permit conditions and, therefore, denied the application. The Board requested that the applicant be advised of the reason for the decision and asked the Director to look into how the non-compliances could be resolved.

## **Feedback on Information sessions for Councils and Consultants on changes to Streamline Assessment Process**

The Board received a briefing on the forums that had been held for Councils and consultants to inform them of the changes that had been made to streamline the Board's assessment process. The forums had generally been considered useful and had served their purpose to communicate the changes and reasons for them to these key stakeholders. The Board requested that a further round of forums be held in 2020 and that participants be surveyed on the usefulness of the forums and any suggestions for improvement.

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### **Meeting 133**

#### **Assessment of Tassal's Hamilton Recirculatory Aquaculture System Hatchery**

This was a special meeting to complete the assessment of Tassal's Hamilton hatchery following the Board's site inspection and meeting with an adjacent landholder.

The Board reviewed members' findings from the site inspection, the discussions with Macquarie-Franklin, Tassal's consultants on irrigation management, and the meeting with the adjacent landholder. The Board further discussed:

- the potential for noise nuisance and available mitigation measures
- the potential for runoff into Lake Meadowbank from irrigation of wastewater and
- irrigation of wastewater at Tassal's Rookwood hatchery.

The Board reviewed Tassal against the requirements of s.42L of EMPCA and concluded that there was no basis on which to refuse to grant an environmental licence in accordance with that section. The Board then completed its assessment of the proposal and determined that it would grant an Environmental Licence to Tassal for the Hamilton hatchery, noting that the licence would not be issued until a permit is granted by the Central Highlands Council and any appeals resolved.

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### **Meeting 134**

An electronic meeting was held to review and sign off on the minutes of the November meetings as an appeal had been lodged against the Board's decision on Tassal's Hamilton Recirculatory Aquaculture System Hatchery.