

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water

Water Sharing Plan for the Central Coast Unregulated and Alluvial Water Sources 2022

Background, consultation and changes

June 2026



Acknowledgement of Country



Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land and pays respect to Elders past, present and future.

We recognise Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to place and their rich contribution to society.

Artist and designer Nikita Ridgeway from Aboriginal design agency – Boss Lady Creative Designs, created the People and Community symbol.

Water Sharing Plan for the Central Coast Unregulated and Alluvial Water Sources 2022

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Glossary and abbreviations

Terms	Definition
Aquifer	An underground layer of water-bearing permeable rock or Cenozoic materials (gravel, sand, silt or clay) from which groundwater can be usefully extracted. The volume of water stored in an aquifer, the rate at which water can recharge, the volume of water extracted from it, and the rate at which water can move through the aquifer are all controlled by the geologic nature of the aquifer.
BLR	Basic landholder right
GDE	Groundwater-dependant ecosystem These are ecosystems that rely on groundwater for their species composition and their natural ecological processes.
LTAAEL	Long-term average annual extraction limit This is the long-term average annual volume of water in an extraction management unit available to be lawfully extracted or otherwise taken under access licences and basic landholder right requirements.
MER	Monitoring, evaluation and reporting
NRAR	Natural Resources Access Regulator
NRC	Natural Resources Commission
NSW	New South Wales
Share component	An entitlement to a given number of shares of the available water in a specified water source. The share component on an access licence certificate is expressed as a unit share. The share component of a specific purpose access licence (e.g. local water utility, major water utility and domestic and stock) is expressed in megalitres per year.
Third order or higher streams	‘Stream order’ is used to describe the hierarchy of streams from the top to the bottom of a catchment. To determine the stream order, apply the Strahler system to streams shown in the hydro line spatial data: https://www.water.dcceew.nsw.gov.au/our-

	<u>work/licensing-and-approvals/controlled-activity-approvals/development-activities-waterfront-0</u>
WM Act	<i>NSW Water Management Act 2000</i>
WSP	Water sharing plan. Generalised term used for any water sharing plan, not specific to a particular plan.

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1 Introduction

Water sharing plans were developed for rivers and groundwater systems across NSW following the introduction of the *Water Management Act 2000* (WM Act). These plans protect the health of our rivers and groundwater while providing water users with perpetual access licences, sustainable resource management, equitable water sharing arrangements, and increased opportunities to trade water.

NSW water sharing plans are valid for 10 years from their start date. The NSW department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (the department) amends water sharing plans throughout their life to ensure they comply with changing legislation and to help carry them out. However, near the end of a plan's 10-year term, the Natural Resources Commission (NRC) formally reviews it to identify any changes that are necessary to deliver better outcomes for all water users, including the environment.

Water in the Central Coast area has previously been managed through the Water Sharing Plan for the Central Coast Unregulated Water Sources 2009 (Central Coast 2009 plan). This plan expired in June 2022 and was replaced with the Water Sharing Plan for the Central Coast Unregulated and Alluvial Water Sources 2022 (Central Coast 2022 plan), which commenced on 1 July 2022 and underwent a minor amendment in 2024.

This document gives high-level background information on the planning process as well as details of changes to management arrangements in the Central Coast 2022 plan.

The Central Coast 2022 plan covers 8 water sources. These are:

- Brisbane Water Water Source
- Central Coast Coastal Floodplain Alluvial Groundwater Water Source
- Jiliby Jiliby Creek Water Source
- Mangrove Creek Water Source
- Mooney Mooney Creek Water Source
- Ourimbah Creek Water Source,
- Tuggerah Lakes Water Source and
- Wyong River Water Source.

You can find links to the plan, maps and rule summary sheets on the [Central Coast Region](#) page on the department's website.

The resources in 'Appendix A – References and supporting documents' give more details of the plan area, its water resources and resource management.

2 Changes to the plan in 2024

In 2024 the Central Coast 2022 plan was amended to correct minor errors and address other issues that were considered to have minimal impact on water users. Due to the scope and minimal impact of the changes the amendment process did not involve a public exhibition and formal submission process. However, the amendments were developed in consultation with interagency representatives including from department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) Agriculture and Fisheries and the department's Conservation Programs, Heritage and Regulation (CPHR) group.

The most substantial changes relate to the take of water from natural off-river pools and in-river dam pools to improve consistency with the WM Act principles and the department's pools policy. These include applying a default no-drawdown below full pool capacity rule to protect natural off-river pools, except if otherwise authorised, as well as removing a similar no-drawdown rule that was mistakenly applied to in -river dam pools.

It's important to note that cases have been identified where some existing in-river dams have not been properly specified on the relevant water supply work approval at conversion to the WM Act due to historical licensing practices.

The amended rules allow for drawdown of an in-river dam pool in accordance with the conditions of an approval relating to the take of water from the dam where the dam is referenced on the work approval or licence. If the dam is not referenced, then water cannot be taken where flow classes are established, and flow is in the very low flow class or if the in – river dam pool is below full pool capacity. It is a requirement that water users hold appropriate approvals for their in-river dams. Further information on approval requirements can be obtained from the WaterNSW website or by contacting WaterNSW.

There are some historical anomalies with licences and work approvals within the Mangrove Creek and Mooney Mooney Creek water sources. The department has delayed the commencement of the access rules in these water sources until 1 July 2027 in order to resolve these anomalies and the 2024 amendment also further clarifies this.

Other changes include minor grammar and referencing corrections and improvements to wording for increased clarification and to provide for the intended application of rules.

The details of the specific changes can be found below in 'Appendix C – Summary of changes made to the 2022 Central Coast Water Sharing Plan (WSP) in 2024'. More information on the changes can be found in the Summary of Changes fact sheet located on the [Central Coast Region](#) page on the department's website. Information on the amendment process can be found in the [Water sharing plan amendment protocol fact sheet](#) on the department's website.

3 Purpose of water sharing plans

Expansion of water extraction across NSW since the beginning of the 20th century has seen increasing competition between water users (towns, farmers and industries) for access to water. This has placed pressure on the health and biological diversity of our rivers and aquifers.

In December 2000, the Parliament of NSW passed the WM Act, which has the overall objective to provide for the sustainable and integrated management of the water sources of the state for the benefit of both present and future generations.

Water sharing plans play a major role in achieving this objective by providing a legal basis for sharing water between the environment and consumptive water users.

Water sharing plans are the primary implementation instrument of the WM Act. They protect the basic rights of landholders to extract water and seek to balance the sustainable use of water for both economic and environmental outcomes.

4 Legislation, policy and planning framework

4.1 Water Management Act 2000

The WM Act is the guiding legislation for water management in NSW. The Act allows for the sustainable and integrated management of water sources. It considers ecologically sustainable development, the protection and enhancement of the environment, and social and economic benefits.

The WM Act sets a maximum initial lifespan of 10 years for water sharing plans, at which point they need to be reviewed and replaced or extended. When deciding whether to extend or replace an existing water sharing plan, the responsible minister must consider:

- the most recent audit of the water sharing plan conducted under section 44 of the WM Act
- a report of the Natural Resources Commission that reviews (within the previous 5 years) if the water sharing provisions have significantly helped to achieve, or have failed to achieve, environmental, social and economic outcomes, and if those provisions should change

Under the WM Act, a water sharing plan may be extended for up to 2 years past the expiry date to allow the department to prepare a replacement plan.

You can review the [NSW Water Management Act 2000](#) on the NSW Legislation website.

4.2 Water sharing plans

A water sharing plan sets out locally appropriate rules and management arrangements for specific water sources that align with the principles of the WM Act.

Key elements of water sharing plans include:

- providing water for the environment by protecting a proportion of the water available for fundamental ecosystem health
- protecting the water required to meet basic landholder rights
- setting annual limits on water extractions that ensures security for water users and the environment
- giving water users a clear picture of when and how water will be available for extraction
- giving licence holders flexibility in the way they can manage their water accounts
- specifying rules in groundwater plans to minimise effects on other groundwater users, groundwater-dependent ecosystems (GDEs), culturally significant sites, water quality and the stability of the aquifer
- specifying the rules for water trading/dealings
- setting the mandatory conditions that apply to licence holders

You can review the Central Coast 2022 plan on the [water sharing plan pages of the department's website](#).

4.3 NSW water policy

We are continuously evolving and improving water-related policy and decision-making processes that carry out the above legislative framework to ensure effective delivery of our water resource management objectives. We develop plans in line with the principles of the WM Act and the [National Water Initiative](#).

You can find more information on the [National Water Initiative](#) on the Australian department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water website.

4.4 Changes to policy for harvestable rights in coastal areas

In May 2022 the limit for uptake of harvestable rights water in coastal catchments was raised from 10 % to 30 %. As of 27 September 2023, the harvestable rights limit for coastal NSW has been returned to the previous limit of 10 %, to allow sustainable levels of extraction to be determined prior to any increase in harvestable rights. The department has been in contact with the small number of customers who have registered to increase their harvestable rights storage capacity during this time and is working with the individuals to find suitable solutions.

The Central Coast 2022 plan includes an amendment to assess uptake of harvestable rights within 3 years of the plan commencement to determine if there has been any increase in uptake of water due to the increase to 30 %. The amendment also includes the ability to modify access rules in Parts 6 to 8 of the plan in response to any significant increases of uptake to protect critical environmental needs and basic landholder rights.

Due to the small number of instances where land holders have registered their intent to increase harvestable rights uptake the department does not expect any significant changes to rules in the plan as a result of an increased uptake of harvestable rights. For more information on the specific changes to harvestable rights please visit the department's [frequently asked questions](#) asked questions webpage or for general information, the [harvestable rights](#) webpage.

5 Water sharing plan review and replacement process

Under the WM Act, water sharing plans have a 10-year duration.

During the life of a plan, it will undergo an independent review at least twice, as follows:

- The implementation of the plan will be audited in the first 5 years of the plan under section 44 of the WM Act.
- The performance of the plan will be reviewed in its last 5 years under section 43A of the WM Act.

The Natural Resources Commission (NRC) is the independent body that audits and reviews water sharing plans. The section 44 audits aim to identify where improvements are necessary to apply the plan rules. The section 43A review is to determine if the plan is achieving the intended environmental, social and economic outcomes.

The NRC reports the findings of the audits and reviews to the NSW minister responsible for water, who decides whether to extend a plan for another 10 years or to replace it. If the NRC recommends replacing the plan, the department considers the commission's recommendations when developing the replacement plan.

More information and links to the review for the Lower North Coast 2009 plan are in section 6 of this document.

The minister at the time adopted the NRC's recommendation to replace the Lower North Coast 2009 plan. To allow time to review and replace the plan, it was extended by 2 years.

You can find more information on the water sharing plan review and replacement process in the [Replacement Water Sharing Plan Manual \(PDF 2.2 MB\)](#).

6 The Central Coast 2022 plan

6.1 Overview

The Central Coast 2022 plan area (shown in Figure 1) is located to the north of Sydney. The plan area covers more than 156,000 hectares and is bordered to the east by the Pacific Ocean, to the west by the MacDonald River catchment (a Hawkesbury River tributary), to the north-west by the Wollombi Brook catchment (a tributary of the Hunter River), to the north-east by the Lake Macquarie catchment, and to the south by Broken Bay and the Hawkesbury River.

A high proportion of the fresh water in the Central Coast catchment comes from the headwaters of the major streams situated along the Mangrove Mountain Kulnura ridge (which is often described as an indistinct plateau). The head-water streams coming off the plateau are steep relative to the low-land reaches, which are much flatter.

The Central Coast 2022 plan manages surface water to the extent of any downstream limit identified on the plan map and all alluvial groundwater within the plan area.

Significant primary industries on the Central Coast include turf growing, fruit (primarily citrus), vegetable production, poultry, and water bottling. Major population centres include Gosford and Wyong, which are subject to seasonal population fluctuations due to holiday visitors. Away from the coast, there are a few small rural towns such as Dooralong and Central Mangrove.

Central Coast Council is the largest extractor of water, owning and operating several dams and weirs. These include:

- Mangrove Creek Dam, which captures the headwater flows of Mangrove Creek
- Mangrove Creek Weir located downstream of Mangrove Creek Dam at the tidal limit
- Upper Mooney Mooney Creek Dam, which is mid-way along the creek's length
- Upper Ourimbah Creek Weir, which is mid-way along the creek's length
- Wyong River Weir located at the tidal limit
- Mardi Dam located on a small watercourse halfway between the Wyong and Ourimbah Weirs.

Total licensed entitlement for the plan area is approximately 120,659 ML. This entitlement represents average annual maximum potential extraction. The breakdown of licensed entitlement in the Central Coast 2022 plan for different licence categories is summarised in Table 2.

In addition to licensed extraction, water is also required to meet Basic Landholder Rights (BLR). Table 1 details the potential levels of extraction for BLR within the Central Coast 2022 plan area. BLR also includes harvestable rights.

Table 1: Estimated requirements for water in the Central Coast 2022 plan – Basic landholder rights

Extraction type	Potential extraction (ML/year)
Domestic and stock	1,078
Native title	Zero at start of plan
Harvestable rights	10 % of rainfall runoff per property

Table 2: Estimated requirements for water in the Central Coast 2022 plan – Licensed extraction

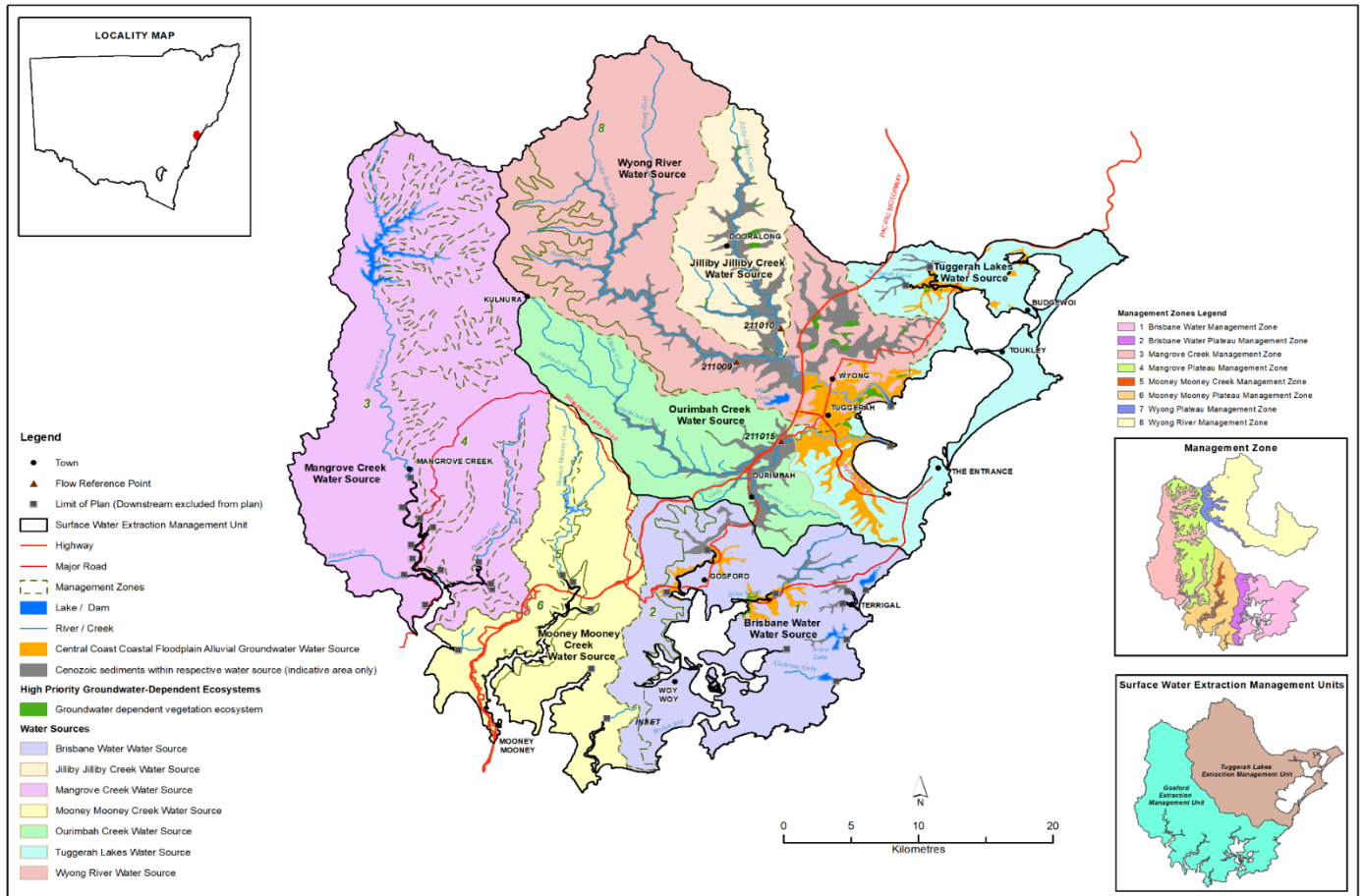
Licensed extraction subcategory	Potential extraction (ML/year)
Domestic and stock	216
Local water utility	105,870
Unregulated river	14,270
Aquifer	303

The Extraction Management Units (EMUs) and water sources that are managed under the Central Coast 2022 plan are in Table 3.

Table 3: Extraction management units and Water Sources in the Central Coast 2022 plan

Licensed extraction subcategory	Potential extraction (ML/year)
Central Coast Coastal Floodplain Alluvial	Central Coast Coastal Floodplain Alluvial Groundwater
Gosford	a. Brisbane Water b. Mangrove Creek c. Mooney Mooney Creek
Tuggerah Lakes	a. Jilliby Jilliby Creek b. Ourimbah Creek c. Tuggerah Lakes d. Wyong River

Figure 1: Central Coast unregulated and alluvial water sharing plan area



6.2 Previous plans

The Central Coast 2009 plan commenced on 1 August 2010 and ended on 30 June 2022. In 2016, the plan was amended to include the Ourimbah Creek and Jilibby Jilibby Creek water sources and management provisions. These water sources were previously managed under the:

- [Water Sharing Plan for the Ourimbah Creek Water Source 2003](#)
- [Water Sharing Plan for the Jilibby Jilibby Creek Water Source 2003](#)

Further information on the development of the Central Coast 2009 plan can be found in the [Water Sharing Plan for the Central Coast 2009 – Background document](#).

The Central Coast 2009 plan was developed using the macro approach and included extensive stakeholder and interagency consultation. Details of the macro planning approach can be found in:

- [Macro water sharing plans - approach for unregulated rivers \(PDF 647 KB\)](#).
- [Macro water sharing plans – access and trading rules for pools \(PDF 621 KB\)](#)
- [Macro water sharing plans - the approach for groundwater \(PDF 1,674 KB\)](#)

As of 1 July 2022, the water sources are now managed under the [Water Sharing Plan for the Central Coast Unregulated and Alluvial Water Sources 2022](#).

When access rules in a water sharing plan change, licence holders are required to comply with the existing licence conditions until they are notified of updated licence conditions by receipt of a new Statement of Conditions. For further information see the factsheet - [Complying with new or changed access rules](#).

6.3 Developing the 2022 plan

The processes that the department have used in developing the replacement plan are an update on the previous macro-planning approach.

The development of replacement plans now follows the processes described in the [Replacement Water Sharing Plan Manual \(PDF 2.2 MB\)](#).

We continue to use some methods described in the macro-planning approach. This background document will describe the most recent and specific methods used to prepare the Central Coast 2022 plan.

The department is responsible for implementing the WM Act, including developing water sharing plans for NSW water resources. When drafting the Central Coast 2022 plan, we considered:

- the section 44 audit between 2009 and 2014 of the Water Sharing Plan for the Central Coast Unregulated Water Sources 2009
- recommendations from the NRC 2020 review of the Water Sharing Plan for the Central Coast Unregulated Water Sources 2009
- updated data, information and science
- the deliberations across government agencies including the departments Water Group and Conservation Programs, Heritage and Regulation (CPHR) Group, the Department of Primary Industries' Agriculture and Fisheries branches, and the Natural Resource Access Regulator (NRAR)
- changes in policy
- consultation with Central Coast Council
- consultation with the wider community.

You can find the [Water Sharing Plan for the Central Coast Unregulated and Alluvial Water Sources 2022](#) on the department's website.

Details of the changes from the Central Coast 2009 plan are in section 7 of this document.

6.4 First Nations consultation

Local Aboriginal land councils were invited to participate in consultation during development of the draft Central Coast 2022 plan. However, due to Covid-19 this was not possible. Consultation will be ongoing throughout the life of the plan.

6.5 Public exhibition and finalising the 2022 plan

The department exhibited the draft replacement Central Coast 2022 plan between 30 November 2020 and 31 January 2021 and then extended in response to stakeholder requests to 14 February 2021. Two public information sessions were held. Due to the COVID -19 pandemic, information sessions were given via live webinars. Plans to meet with First Nations representatives face to face were cancelled due to the pandemic.

We received 16 submissions. Issues raised in submissions are summarised in the [Outcomes of Public Exhibition](#).

In finalising the replacement plan, the department considered submissions as well as further deliberations and input from government agencies including the Water Group and CPHR Group from department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, the department of Primary Industries' Agriculture and Fisheries branches, and NRAR.

Section 7 of this document details changes from the previous plan to the current plan. Appendix B details changes between the public exhibition draft and final 2022 plan, including if a change was in response to submissions received. Appendix C details changes to the Central Coast 2022 plan that occurred through an amendment in 2024.

Significant water sharing matters raised include proposed changes to implement 'no visible flow' cease-to-take rules in 2 water sources and proposed 24-hour commence-to-pump delay rules in 5 water sources. The concerns raised in relation to the 'no visible flow' rules have been addressed by improving wording to clarify exemptions. Further analysis of the commence-to-pump rules resulted in them being removed from 3 water sources in the Central Coast 2022 plan and amended to specify a commence-to-pump flow rather than a 24-hour delay in the Wyong and Ourimbah water sources.

7 Changes from the 2009 plan the 2022 plan

7.1 Overview

Key drivers for the changes in the Central Coast 2022 plan were:

- the NRC's review recommendations
- contemporary water resource policy – changes to the plan include alignment with current policy to help improve efficiency and consistency in achieving water resource management objectives across the state
- updated data and knowledge improvements
- consultation on the draft plan, feedback and submissions.

Changes to the plan reflect improved understanding and updated data. They aim to modernise and simplify the water sharing plan to make it easier to read, while ensuring provisions are implementable and legally accurate.

Changes were made to:

- the general layout of the plan

- include a new alluvial groundwater water source
- the vision, objectives, strategies, and performance indicators
- update the basic land holder right estimate and access licence share components
- the cease-to-pump rules
- include commence-to-pump rules for Wyong river and Ourimbah Creek water sources
- removal of total daily extraction limits
- prohibit new in-river dams in Jilliby Creek and Ourimbah Creek water sources
- prohibit water supply works approvals near State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP) wetlands and potential acid sulfate soils
- protect high-priority, Groundwater-Dependent Ecosystems (GDEs)
- trade provisions
- the plan map
- adaptive management and amendment provisions.

Appendix B details substantive changes between the public exhibition draft and final Central Coast 2022 plan, including if a change was in response to submissions received.

Appendix C details changes to the Central Coast 2022 plan that occurred through an amendment in 2024.

For a summary of all issues raised in submissions, regardless of whether they led to a change, please refer to the [Outcomes of Public Exhibition](#) fact sheet.

Rules Summary Sheets for each water source are available on [the department's website](#). These detail the relevant rules that apply to each water source under the Central Coast 2022 plan.

7.2 General layout changes

There are several structural layout changes in the Central Coast 2022 plan. We have moved or reworded clauses, but their intent is the same. Such changes reflect updated template styles that provide a more standard and consistent layout across the state's water sharing plans at the time, as well as making the water sharing plan easier to understand.

For example, we have removed unnecessary notes, as well as moving and consolidating amendment provisions to the amendment part of the plan.

7.3 Inclusion of a new coastal floodplain alluvial groundwater source

Not all groundwater in alluvial sediments downstream of the tidal limits was included in the Central Coast 2009 plan. The Central Coast 2022 plan establishes a new water source, the Central Coast Coastal Floodplain Alluvial Groundwater Water Source (CFA water source). The CFA water source covers the alluvial floodplain deposits that are hydrogeologically distinct from the upriver alluvial

deposits, which are more connected to surface water. The boundaries of the CFA water source are shown on the map in Figure 1. You can find a high-resolution map of the Central Coast water sharing plan area on the [department's website](#).

Existing WM Act groundwater licences within the boundaries of the CFA water source will be amended to reflect the new water source. The establishment of the CFA water source will not result in tangible changes for existing water users taking water or affect water availability for these users.

Water sources managed under a water sharing plan are subject to Long-Term Average Annual Extraction Limits (LTAAELs). A LTAAEL of 1,175 megalitres/year has been set for the CFA water source. This volume caters for current and estimated future demand and is equivalent to 25 % of the average annual recharge for the water source.

In determining the limit, the department considered the principles set out in [Macro water sharing plans – the approach for groundwater \(PDF, 2,414.13 KB\)](#).

Unlike other water sources in the Central Coast 2022 plan, more licence shares may be granted in the CFA water source through a controlled allocation process. This is because the sum of current entitlement and BLR is well below the LTAAEL.

Aboriginal community development and Aboriginal cultural specific-purpose access licences may also be granted in the CFA water source.

Trading into the CFA water source is not permitted as it is not hydrologically highly connected to any other water sources.

The Minister for Water makes Available Water Determinations (AWDs) each year to allocate a volume of water to each water allocation account. The Central Coast 2022 plan sets out the rules for how those accounts are to be managed.

AWDs are also used to return extraction in a water source to the LTAAEL if it is exceeded. This is unlikely in the case of the CFA water source as the LTAAEL is much higher than combined current entitlement and BLR use.

7.4 Vision, objectives, strategies and performance indicators

Part 2 of the Central Coast 2022 plan describes the vision and objectives. The plan's vision encompasses the overall aim of the plan. The vision of the plan is to provide for the:

- health of the water sources and their dependent ecosystems
- continuing productive extraction of water for economic benefit
- spiritual, social, customary and economic benefits of water to Aboriginal communities
- social and cultural benefits to urban and rural communities that result from water.

The objectives of the plan have been updated to be more defined and to distinguish more clearly between the environmental, economic, social and Aboriginal cultural objectives. The strategies and performance indicators have also been updated and more clearly linked to objectives to make measuring the success of the plan easier.

The objectives are arranged into 4 categories: environmental, economic, Aboriginal cultural, and social and cultural. Under each category is:

- a broad objective
- targeted objectives – more specific objectives that should be achieved to reach the broad objective
- strategies – actions for achieving the targeted objectives
- performance indicators – assessment parameters to measure the success of the strategies in reaching the objectives.

The updates to this part of the plan reflect a standard, state-wide approach that is being applied to all water sharing plans when they are replaced. They also address NRC recommendations to strengthen monitoring, evaluation and reporting of the plan outcomes.

7.5 Updated basic landholder rights estimates and licence share components

We have updated the estimate of extraction of water under BLR. The water access licence share components (water entitlements for each water source) have also been updated to reflect total share components for each water source at the commencement of the plan. The new figures are in Part 5 of the Central Coast 2022 plan.

Since the development of the first water sharing plans, which began before 2003, numerous methods have been followed to estimate water requirements for domestic and stock BLR. These methods were superseded in 2010 by a standard NSW approach to support the development of surface and groundwater macro-water sharing plans.

We adopted the same method used in the development of macro-water sharing plans for estimating the water requirements of domestic and stock BLR. This method is in Appendix 5 of the [Replacement Water Sharing Plan Manual \(PDF 2.2 MB\)](#).

The revised estimates may differ from those in the Central Coast 2009 plan because of changes in land use, population density and the availability of more accurate spatial data.

7.6 Cease-to-pump rules – no visible flow and access to pools

Part 8 Division 3 of the Central Coast 2022 plan details the rules for taking surface water.

Visible flow rule

The Central Coast 2009 plan applied a rule that required licence holders to cease pumping when there is no visible flow at the pump site in 5 of the 7 surface water sources.

The Central Coast 2022 plan has extended those provisions to also apply to the Mangrove Creek and Mooney Mooney Creek water sources. The visible flow rules for the two additional water sources will come into effect from 1 July 2027.

For all water sources, licensed extractions from in river pools, in river dam pools and off river pools are exempt from the no visible flow cease to pump rule.

Extraction from Natural pools

The Central Coast 2009 plan applied a rule that required licence holders who extract from a natural in-river or off-river pool to cease pumping when the pool is below full capacity in 5 of the 7 surface water sources.

The Central Coast 2022 plan has extended those provisions to apply to the Mangrove Creek and Mooney Mooney Creek water sources from 1 July 2027. It did not however include the no pumping unless the pool is at full capacity for the off-river pools. This has been clarified through the amendments made in 2024.

This rule does not apply to in-river dam pools in any water sources.

Extraction from In-river dam pools

The Central Coast 2009 plan applied a rule that water must not be taken when flows are in the very low flow class (in water sources where flow classes are established) to all extraction except for extraction from in-river dam pools. This rule did not apply to local water utilities.

The Central Coast 2022 plan applies the same rules and also limits extraction from in river dam pools if the volume of water in the pool is less than full capacity unless a water supply work approval is held in respect of the in-river dam and the work is used in accordance with any conditions on the water supply work approval. Application of this rule is delayed until 1 July 2027 for the Mangrove Creek and Mooney Mooney Water Sources in recognition of some licensing anomalies in the area.

This rule was simplified in 2024 to clarify that the delay in application until 1 July 2027 applies to in-river dams in Mangrove and Mooney Mooney water sources. This change was made in recognition of some licensing anomalies in the area and to ensure that the delay in application does not apply to unauthorised works.

Groundwater access rules

In recognition of the groundwater-surface water interaction, access rules for the take of alluvial groundwater within 40 metres of the river have been introduced which require that pumping must cease when there is no visible flow at the location in the river closest to the bore and when flows are in the very low flow class where flow classes have been established.

7.7 Commence-to-pump rules – Wyong River and Ourimbah Creek water sources

Part 8, divisions 2 and 3 of the Central Coast 2022 plan detail the rules for taking surface water.

The Central Coast 2022 plan has introduced a commence-to-pump provision for unregulated river access licences in the Ourimbah Creek and Wyong River water sources.

For Wyong River water source, the 4 ML/day combined flow cease-to-pump provision is retained. However, when a cease-to-pump event is triggered, pumping may not commence until the combined flows reach 5 ML/day.

For Ourimbah Creek water source, the 4 ML/day cease-to-pump provision is retained. However, when a cease-to-pump event is triggered, pumping may not commence until flows reach 5 ML/day at the reference gauge.

These changes are intended to provide improved ecological outcomes during critical low flow periods.

These changes do not apply to local water utility access licences.

7.8 Removal of total daily extraction limits

The Central Coast 2009 plan included a provision that established total daily extraction limits Total Daily Extraction Limits (TDELs) for:

- flow classes A, B and C for local water utility and other access licences in the Wyong River Water Source
- flow classes A, B, C, D, E for local water utility licences in the Ourimbah Creek Water Source.

For local water utility access licences, the TDEL concept is retained but are now simply referred to as local water utility access rules (found in Part 8 Division 3 of the Central Coast 2022 plan).

The original intent of TDELs was that they could be imposed broadly on a group of access licences. Monitoring, infrastructure and management frameworks are not currently to the level required to implement, daily or individual extraction limits.

To align with this change in management approach, the TDEL provisions for licences other than local water utility were replaced with an amendment clause that provides for establishing IDELs as appropriate in the future, provided this does not substantially change the LTAAEL.

7.9 Prohibit in river dams in Jilliby Jilliby Creek and Ourimbah Creek water sources

Water Sharing Plans contain specific rules relating to the construction and operation of in-river dams.

Current policy prohibits the construction of new in-river dams in third order or higher streams in water sources identified as having high instream value or where such a prohibition is already in place in the current water sharing plan. The Central Coast 2022 plan prohibits the construction of new in-river dams in the Jilliby Jilliby Creek and Ourimbah Creek water sources. This restriction was in place for these water sources in the Water Sharing Plan for the Water Sharing Plan for the Ourimbah Creek Water Source 2003 and Water Sharing Plan for the Water Sharing Plan for the Jilliby Jilliby Creek Water Source 2003. However, an administrative error resulted in the provision being missed when the water sources were merged into the Central Coast 2009 plan in 2016. This change provides for the original intended management arrangements for these water sources.

An assessment identified Jilliby Jilliby Creek and Ourimbah Creek water sources as having high risk to environmental factors due to licensed extraction. This further highlighted the appropriateness of re-establishing these provisions.

7.10 Prohibit water supply works near SEPP wetlands and potential acid sulfate soils

The *Coastal Management Act 2016* and *State Environmental Planning Policy (Coastal Management) 2018* (Coastal SEPP) specifies how developments within the coastal zone should be assessed. The Coastal SEPP identifies wetlands in order to protect their ecological values. There is a need for coastal WSPs to recognise these same wetlands to ensure protection and alignment between regulatory objectives.

The Central Coast 2022 plan prohibits new or amended water supply works being constructed in the Brisbane Water, Tuggerah Lakes, Wyong River and Central Coast Floodplain Alluvial Groundwater water sources unless it can be demonstrated that they would result in no more than minimal harm to a wetland mapped under the Coastal SEPP.

The Central Coast 2022 plan also includes rules to prevent the acidification of water sources through drainage of potential acid sulfate soils. The rule prohibits new or amended water supply works that take groundwater being constructed within an area classed as having a high probability of the occurrence of acid sulfate soils.

7.11 Protection of high-priority, groundwater -dependent ecosystems

The Central Coast 2022 plan includes a map of Groundwater-Dependent Ecosystems (GDEs). High-priority GDEs previously listed in a schedule to the Central Coast 2009 plan have been retained and additional GDEs are shown on a map.

GDEs are those ecosystems that need access to groundwater to maintain their plant and animal communities and ecological processes. The Central Coast 2009 plan protected GDEs by specifying minimum distance rules for new or amended groundwater works (bores), which varied depending on the annual extraction limits to be associated with a groundwater works. This has been replaced with standard distance rules in the Central Coast 2022 plan.

The mapped GDEs are the result of a departmental program to identify and prioritise GDEs in NSW. The identification method incorporated existing vegetation community mapping and remote sensing to identify vegetation communities. The method includes analysing monitoring-bore data to identify potential groundwater dependence of the vegetation communities and identifying vegetation communities as terrestrial GDEs overlying alluvial resources.

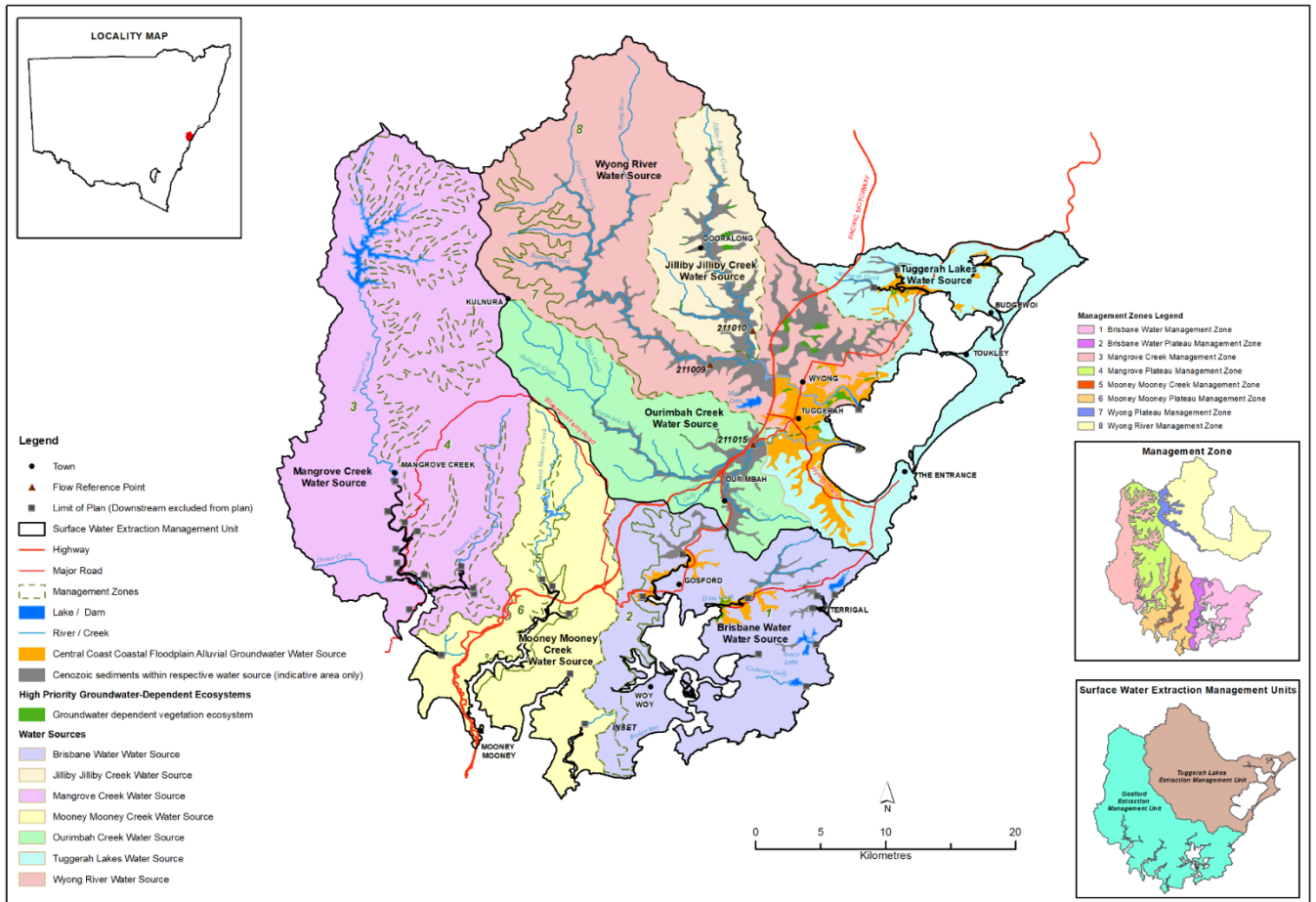
The mapping was supported by field-based verification in sample areas representing different land cover types. Sites were selected from almost all major catchments distributed across NSW to ensure that each area had a representative geographic sample that reflected the diverse environmental conditions and management practices.

The high-priority GDEs we identify on a map in the Central Coast 2022 plan are vegetation ecosystems that have a high probability of being groundwater-dependent and are of very high or high ecological value. As it is not certain (only highly probable) that the vegetation community is groundwater-dependent, the distance rules for groundwater works from the GDEs shown on the map are subject to the department confirming the high probability of groundwater dependence of the ecosystem.

For more information on the methods we employed to identify GDEs, see the paper [Methods for the identification of high probability groundwater dependent vegetation ecosystems \(PDF 8.6 MB\)](#).

The GDE map included in the plan is shown in Figure 2. You can view a high-resolution version of the [high-priority GDE map](#) on the Department's web page.

Figure 2: High-priority groundwater-dependent ecosystems map



7.12 Trade provisions

Trade is an important tool for making both environmental and economic improvements. If trading rules are too restrictive it limits the ability to move take of water out of high environmental value areas to lower environmental value areas, provides no flexibility for water users and hinders the establishment of a water market. Where water sources have medium to low environmental value and are not flow stressed trade should be permitted.

The Central Coast 2009 plan permitted, within limits, trade into Jiliby Jiliby Creek and Ourimbah Creek water sources. The Central Coast 2022 plan now prohibits trade into these water sources. This change reduces the potential for additional extractive stress to the high-risk freshwater ecosystems as identified in the risk assessment that informed the plan replacement process.

Consistent with the Central Coast 2009 plan, the Central Coast 2022 plan prohibits trade:

- between water sources that are not hydrologically connected,
- into water sources or management zones that have high ecological value,
- where there are no references points/gauges.

7.13 Adaptive management and amendment provisions

Adaptive management means changing things in response to new information. During the life of a water sharing plan, this information may come from data collection and monitoring or from some other improvement in understanding. Such information could include socio-economic studies, hydrological modelling, ecological studies and information about Aboriginal cultural sites.

Adaptive management is a requirement of both the WM Act and the National Water Initiative. The WM Act allows for changes to a water sharing plan during its life if this is in the public interest. The plan also allows for amendments during its life as described in Part 13 of the plan.

Examples of adaptive environmental water provisions in the Central Coast 2022 plan include the ability to amend:

- water management arrangements for Central Coast Council
- rules to protect water-dependent Aboriginal cultural assets
- to establish individual daily extraction limits as long as it does not substantially change the LTAAEL
- dealing rules following a state-wide review of trade in unregulated river systems
- access rules if there is an increased uptake of harvestable rights above 10 % of rainfall runoff by year 3 of the plan
- to update the long-term average annual extraction limit to be a proportion of flow during the life of the plan.

8 Monitoring, evaluation and reporting

Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting (MER) are key components to adaptive management. They ensure that water sharing plans are effective in meeting their objectives.

Comprehensive MER programs are resource intensive and long term. We must prioritise areas where there is a high risk of water extraction affecting environmental assets or where the demand for water is relatively high compared to the volume of water available.

The department is working on a project to prioritise water sources for MER activities, based on risk in areas that have high levels of extraction, ecological value, or stakeholder needs.

The MER plan is a framework specifically designed for the water sharing plan. It will follow established guidelines and include both freshwater and estuarine ecosystems.

9 Areas of other work

9.1 Metering and record keeping

The NSW Government's non-urban water metering framework, initiated in December 2018, aims to ensure the fair and equitable sharing of water among users, enhancing transparency and efficiency in water management across the state. The framework's implementation was staged to allow water users, suppliers, and installers sufficient time to achieve compliance. The NSW Government has recently completed a review of the non-urban metering rules and has updated the Regulation to make compliance quicker, easier and more cost effective.

The new metering rules require water users to assess their compliance requirements using their total entitlement and work size. Large water users must comply with the highest metering standards whilst smaller water users now have less prescriptive metering requirements.

Water users are encouraged to consult the department's [non-urban metering](#) website for detailed information and updates. To verify individual access licence details, please refer to the [WaterNSW Water Register](#).

Water use information obtained through the water metering program may provide a useful indicator of actual water usage. Water sharing plans have to date been largely developed using licensed entitlement because estimates of actual water usage have until now been unreliable. Future water sharing plans will be able to incorporate actual water usage when assessing risks and developing rules.

9.2 Flow requirements for key assets and functions

Several government agencies such as DPIRD – Fisheries and the department's CPHR Group are working on flow requirements for key assets and ecosystem functions. As these become available and there is sufficient flow data, we can use this information in making water-sharing decisions.

9.3 Cultural flows and improving the involvement of First Nations Peoples in water management

The department will work toward priorities in the State Water Strategy. Priority 2 of the State Water Strategy is to Recognise First Nations/Aboriginal People's rights and values and increase access to and ownership of water for cultural and economic purposes.

The NSW Government recognises First Nations/Aboriginal People's rights to water and our aim is to secure a future where water for First Nations/Aboriginal People is embedded within the water planning and management regime in NSW, delivering cultural, spiritual, social, environmental and economic benefit to communities.

Actions under the State Water Strategy include:

- strengthening the role of First Nations/Aboriginal People in water planning and management
- developing a state-wide Aboriginal water strategy
- providing for Aboriginal ownership of and access to water for cultural and economic purposes
- working with First Nations/Aboriginal People to improve shared water knowledge
- working with First Nations/Aboriginal People to maintain and preserve water-related cultural sites and landscapes.

The department is committed to providing greater opportunities for Aboriginal water management and participation in water sharing. A new Aboriginal water directorate has been established within the department and work is progressing on an Aboriginal Water Strategy which will identify the ways in which we can achieve the priorities under the State Water Strategy. The department has established Regional Aboriginal Water Advisory Committees in each of the NSW water regions and piloted some cultural watering plans in various parts of NSW.

9.4 Stormwater harvesting

The department is developing a stormwater harvesting policy to determine the best way to manage stormwater extraction to maximise the benefits of re-using stormwater and reducing erosion of water ways while ensuring adequate water is available for the environment and water users.

9.5 Sustainable long-term average annual extraction limits

The NRC has recommended that LTAAELs on the coast be set at a sustainable level. The department is considering ways of doing this.

9.6 Climate change

Australia has a highly variable climate, and rainfall is especially variable. This makes it vital that we understand as much as we can about our climate so we can work out how we manage our water supplies. The frequency and duration of wet and dry events determine how much water we have available.

NSW is already experiencing trends of higher average temperatures and reduced cool season rainfall. There are indications from climate models that drought conditions may become more frequent and severe, and last longer.

Higher demand from a growing population, alongside reductions in supply, will increase water scarcity, putting more pressure on all users, including the environment Productivity Commission, National Water Reform Issues Paper, May 2020, p.2). We must collectively improve our understanding of these risks to better manage water supply and ensure that our operational, planning and future development decisions take future water reliability and security into account.

The department has developed river models that incorporate stochastic long-term data to help guide regional water strategies. We can use these models to inform water sharing decisions as they are developed across the state. For example, as we understand what sustainable LTAAELs are, we will consider the future effects of climate change. Rising sea level models will also be incorporated into future water sharing decisions.

Priority 4 of the State Water Strategy is to increase resilience to changes in water availability (variability and climate change). The 2021/22 action plan looks to improve and apply our understanding of climate variability and change. This includes work to determine a methodology and progressively incorporate climate risk data into water sharing plans and environmental water management decision making.

Appendix A – References and supporting documents

- [Water Sharing Plan for the Central Coast Unregulated and Alluvial Water Sources 2022](#)
- The [rules summary sheets](#) for the Central Coast 2022 plan
- [Summary of changes to the Central Coast Water Sharing Plan fact sheet](#)
- [NSW Legislation website](#) – contains NSW legislation, including WM Act
- [National Water Initiative](#)
- The previous water sharing plan, [The Water Sharing Plan for the Central Coast Unregulated Water Sources 2009](#)
- The [background document for the previous \(2009\) water sharing plan](#)
- Details of the macro planning approach can be found here:
 - [Macro water sharing plans – the approach for unregulated rivers - Access and trading rules for pools \(PDF 829 KB\)](#)
 - [Macro water sharing plans – the approach for unregulated rivers. A report to assist community consultation \(PDF 627 KB\)](#)
 - [Macro water sharing plans – the approach for groundwater. A report to assist community consultation \(PDF 3.11 MB\)](#)
- The [Natural Resources Commission’s review of the previous \(2009\) water sharing plan](#)

Appendix B – Substantive changes made between public exhibition draft and final Central Coast 2022 plan

Note: This section should be read in conjunction with Appendix C as amendments were made to the plan in 2024 which may supersede some of the changes described in this Appendix.

Table 4 explains the substantive changes made between the draft plan and the final *Water Sharing Plan for the Central Coast Unregulated and Alluvial Water Sources 2022*.

Table 4. Changes between the draft and 1 July 2022 versions of the Central Coast 2022 plan.

Provisions publicly exhibited draft plan	Final 2022 plan provision	Reason for change
The 2009 plan applied a rule that requires licence holders to cease pumping when there is no visible flow at the pump site in 5 of the 7 surface water sources. The draft replacement plan proposed that these rules are now also applied to the Mangrove Creek Water Source and the Mooney Mooney Creek Water Source. This rule improves water quality at critical times and provides connectivity that maintains pools and habitats for as long as possible. Exemptions are included for licence holders that extract from weirs (in – river dam pools) where the weir has a valid work approval.	An additional exemption clause has been provided in recognition that several historical in-river dams do not have current work approvals. The additional exemption allows for extraction to occur from certain dams without approvals for a period of 5 years.	This issue was raised by several stakeholders during the public exhibition phase and in submissions. This additional, time-limited exemption has been included to allow water users a generous period in which to apply for and obtain the necessary approvals prior to the 6th year of the plan.
The draft replacement plan proposed a 24-hour commence-to-pump delay rule for 5 water sources that would	The proposed 24-hour delay rule was removed from 3 water sources and replaced by a commence-to-pump rule in	A number of submissions raised concerns in regard to the 24-hour delay rule.

require licence holders to wait 24 hours after a cease-to-pump event ends before pumping to protect first-flush events and allow water to move through the system.	Wyong and Ourimbah water sources. For Wyong River and Ourimbah Creek water sources, the 4 ML/d cease-to-pump provision is retained, however when a cease-to-pump event is triggered, pumping may not commence until flows reach 5 ML/d at the reference gauge(s).	These changes were adopted to provide improved ecological outcomes during critical low-flow periods while having only a minor impact on pumping opportunity. These changes do not apply to local water utility access licences.
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Appendix C – Summary of changes made to the 2022 Central Coast plan in 2024

Table 5 Summary of changes made to the 2022 Central Coast plan in 2024

Clause	2023 amendment change	Basis for change
Clause 4 and Appendix 1 (plan maps)	Changing references of ‘unconsolidated sediments’ to ‘Cenozoic sediments’ in the specified clause and the Registered Plan Maps legends.	Cenozoic better describes these alluvial groundwater sediments; it is unambiguous and does not require definition. This will align these plans with the recent changes to the <i>Water Sharing Plan for the North Coast Coastal Sands 2016</i> .
Clause 4(5)	Changing the plan to specify the <i>Water Sharing Plan for the North Coast Coastal Sands 2016</i> .	To exclude water managed under the <i>Water Sharing Plan for the North Coast Coastal Sands 2016</i> from the Central Coast plan where they intersect.
Clauses 10(3)c, 12(3)(e) and 13(3)(d)	Adding ‘off-river pools’ for inclusion with ‘in-river’ pools’ to be protected from drawdown from full capacity in the plan objectives.	To improve clarity of objectives and maintain consistency with access rules.
Clause 36(2)(c)	Adding ‘unit shares’ to the amount of 940 for the limit of entitlement for Aboriginal Community Development Licences in the coastal floodplain alluvial groundwater source.	Including the unit of measure improves clarity around specific trading provisions.
Clause 41	Simplifying the access rules and allowing for the drawdown of in-river dams so long as the dam is operated in accordance with the approval conditions.	The original 2022 plan included complex rules that catered for a specific circumstance where an in-river dam may not have an approval,

		due to an administrative error that is known to have occurred in some parts of the plan area. While the amendments provide for the drawdown of such dam pools, there is still a requirement that water users hold appropriate approvals for their in-river dams. Further information on approval requirements can be obtained from the WaterNSW Approvals webpage.
Clause 41(3)	Take of water from an off-river pool that is below full capacity is now not permitted.	To improve the protection of off-river pools and to provide for accurate and consistent application of existing water policy.
Clauses 43(2)(a)(i) and 47(3)(a)(i)	Adding the word 'vegetables' so that water can be taken to wash vegetables as well as fruit.	The exception to the cease to pump rules was intended to apply to washing of fruits and vegetables, not just fruit.
Clause 43(2)(d) now moved to 43(3)b	Ensuring that the very low flow class cease to pump exemption for unregulated licences when taking from in river dam pools, also applies in the circumstance where the dam is referenced on an approval but not explicitly listed as a work. The exemption has also been narrowed to refer only to the relevant clauses.	This amendment addresses a specific circumstance where an in-river dam may be referenced but not listed as a work on an approval. This is due to an administrative error that is known to have occurred in some parts of the plan area. The amended rules recognise the previously authorised water use and are consistent with former plans and existing policy. While this amendment provides a very low flow class cease to pump exemption for a specific circumstance, there is still a requirement that water users hold appropriate approvals for their in-river

		dams. Further information on approval requirements can be obtained from the WaterNSW Approvals webpage.
Clause 43(3)(a)	Updating wording of clause.	There is no change of intent from this amendment. The amended wording ensures that the provision does not fetter the minister's power under the WM Act.
Clause 50(5)	Removing this provision as it is no longer required.	The original provision was to ensure approvals could be granted for works already constructed which, due to an administrative error, do not have an approval. Changes to wording of clauses 50(1-3) make this provision redundant.
Clause 68(b)	Adding reference to Division 4.	To fix an error so that mandatory conditions apply to both the surface water and groundwater sections in Part 8 (Divisions 3 and 4 instead of just Division 3).
Clause 69(3), 71(5) and 72(4)	Modifying the reference to when the non-urban metering regulation commences so that the plan now specifies 'the day on which the relevant mandatory metering condition applies'.	The start date for the non-urban metering requirements in coastal areas has been postponed from December 2023 to December 2024. The new wording ensures this will not need to be changed again.
Clause 74	Changing the plan to specify that decommissioning of a 'bore' (not all groundwater works) must adhere to the minimum construction requirements.	The minimum construction requirements only apply to bores, not other works that intercept groundwater.

Clause 75(1)(d)	Modifying the plan to clarify that only bores need to be compliant with the construction standards for bores.	Improve clarity and consistency with provision wording between plans.
Clause 75(6)	Correcting the reference to a clause for consideration for replacement groundwater works.	This corrects a cross-referencing error and means a water supply work approval for a replacement groundwater work must give effect to rules in clause 58 as intended, not clause 54.
Dictionary	Including the definition of the plan map. Updating the definition (name) of the GDE map. Updating the definition of groundwater. Removing the 'unconsolidated alluvial sediments' definition.	To improve clarity and maintain consistency with other plans and Department templates.