

Chain Valley/Manning Community Consultative Committee Annual Report for 2022

Details

CCC / Project Name:	Chain Valley Colliery and Manning Colliery	Reporting Period:	January to December 2022
Independent Chairperson:	Margaret MacDonald-Hill	Proponent Contact:	Lachlan McWha

1. Executive Summary

The Chain Valley/Manning Community Consultative Committee (CCC) was previously two separate community consultative committees with adjacent underground operations under the same operator. Mining in the area has been carried out since the 1960s and both committees were established as a requirement of consent conditions for the continuation of mining approval for Chain Valley Colliery in January 2012 and Manning Colliery in March 2008. The committees were combined with Departmental approval in July 2016 and this arrangement remains in force while mining operations stay within the control of the one operator. Ownership of the mines' assets to Great Southern Energy trading as Delta Coal was finalised in April 2019. It is noted that the operations were acquired in December by Sev.en Group from the Czech Republic.

The Chain Valley and Manning Collieries are located on the Central Coast of NSW, approximately sixty kilometres south of Newcastle and bounded generally to the west by the M1 Motorway and the Pacific Highway to the east, abutting the shores of Lake Macquarie. Site infrastructure is within the Central Coast Council Local Government area, whilst current underground mining operations are under the lake in the Lake Macquarie City Council Local Government area. The collieries supply coal to the Vales Point Power Station.

The committee operates in accordance with the Department of Planning and Environment's 2019 Community Consultative Committee Guidelines for State Significant Projects and comprises:

- seven local community representatives;
- an elected representative from Lake Macquarie City Council;
- a representative from Central Coast Council;
- two company representatives, with attendance from other personnel as required;
- one independent Chairperson.

The committee was able to resume normal face-to-face meetings throughout 2022 whilst observing all necessary Covid precautions. Quarterly meetings were held in February, May, August and November.

With the Local Government elections held in December 2021, the committee was pleased to welcome a new councillor representative from Lake Macquarie City Council. Central Coast Council remains under administration with elections expected in 2024. The members have often referred to their locale as the forgotten north of the former Wyong Council, consequently engagement with the local councils is welcome.

With no change in the long term community representation on the committee, all are well known and respected within their local neighbourhoods. The collective knowledge and diverse interests of all the members ensures productive and informative meetings. The company's representatives value the input and local knowledge of the committee and this is reciprocated by a good rapport and information exchange outside of scheduled meetings.

The committee members value the natural attributes of their surrounds of Lake Macquarie and show special interest in the local environment. Discussion on benthic communities species, sea grass changes and comparison with historic monitoring featured throughout the year, together with a reported fish kill in Wyee Bay, the EPA's assessment thereof, followed by a video of bubbles in the lake posted on social media.

Delta Coal informed the committee of the discontinuation of the Eastern Mining Area, notification to the public and extra technical studies associated with it which delayed the consolidation project EIS lodgement.

The objectives of the Rehabilitation Management Plan were also discussed with the status of Radiata pine trees not being a scheduled weed, however the pines do not suit the ecological requirements of the final land use either, being native bushland, vandalism of monitoring equipment reserves and supply of coal to Vales Point Power Station, Delta Coal land ownership and the sale of Delta Coal to Sev.en Group were all topics well canvassed at the meetings.

For the reporting period, other matters discussed at the meetings included, but not limited to:

- general environmental management and monitoring, including air quality, noise, seagrass and aquatic flora, subsidence, foreshore monitoring program and bathymetric survey
- Land management, including weed management within colliery holdings and lake foreshore and environmental site works improvements
- Environmental improvement programs including pollution reduction with improvements and implementation of a Sewage Management System and Government delays with sewer connection and site improvements to improve noise mitigation
- environmental operational updates, approvals, exceedances and incident reports
- Public Exhibition of Environmental Impact Statement of Chain Valley and Mannering consolidation/continuity project
- long term mine plans and transfer of exploration leases from Centennial
- Community Newsletter
- Considerable reduction in complaints
- Relinquishment of lease over Catherine Hill Bay jetty
- Independent Environmental Audits
- Draft changes to CCC guidelines

2. CCC activities over last 12 months

- Committee meetings were held in the months of February, May, August and November 2022. No site tours were undertaken during the year.

3. Key issues

The Committee members continue to take a keen interest in the VPA grants funding to the broader community, even though under Central Coast Council's terms, two members of the CCC will relinquish their positions on the Assessment Panel for the ensuing year.

Improvements to site infrastructure are ongoing with the employment of additional staff as environmental groundsmen. The complaints situation which escalated in prior years with one particular resident has now been resolved. Both the resident and the committee gratefully acknowledge the company's efforts to reduce the noise complaints. The complaints log for 2022 speaks for itself, one complaint received for both collieries in the beginning of the year. As conveyed to the Independent Auditor, there have been no specific concerns raised by members regarding the mines' performance and compliance with regulatory authorities.

The meeting schedule and reporting structure to the committee will remain similar to previous years, in accordance with the consent conditions of approval and departmental guidelines. The committee sets the ensuing year's meeting schedule in November each year to avoid any known conflicts.

Issue	Actions Taken	Next Steps
VPA, CAP and Community Trust	Central Coast Council implemented suggested changes by the CCC with improvements to advertising grant applications and allocations.	Maintain ongoing interest and offer suggestions where appropriate.
Broader community engagement	Delta Coal has updated its website to provide Fact Sheets and additional information to the broader community.	Ongoing as required.
Reduce potential noise complaints	CVC Fan upgraded and further noise mitigation undertaken Decommissioning and bypass of rotary breaker and enclosure of the coal handling preparation plant at Mannering Colliery	Achieved. To be reviewed with further improvements as and when required.
Results of Benthic surveys in Lake Macquarie	Benthic species identified in presentation to February and November meetings. Further request for sea grass changes in Wyee Bay.	On agenda for February 2023 meeting.

4. Focus for next 12 months


The planned activities for 2023 will be guided by the contributions of all the committee members.

Topics may include:

- New ownership
- Water quality in Lake Macquarie
- Subsidence monitoring

To the best of my knowledge, there are no outstanding or emerging issues that have not been addressed or are in the process of being so, to the committee's satisfaction.

Committee Meeting minutes and presentations are available on the website within two weeks of each meeting.

Signature of Chair:	
Date:	February 15 2023.