

WATER SECURITY AND AQUIFERS

MidCoast Council operates six water supply systems, harvesting in the vicinity of 11 billion litres of water per year.

The six water supply systems are located at Bulahdelah, Gloucester, Stroud, Tea Gardens aquifer, Manning River and Nahiack aquifer. These systems provide water to a range of agricultural, commercial, industrial and residential land uses. The largest water supply system is the Manning scheme, which provides water for residents from Harrington in the north to Pacific Palms in the south, servicing approximately 90% of water customers in the MidCoast.

Aquifers are important contributors to our water supply across the MidCoast. During the 2019-20 drought, the Tea Gardens and Nahiack aquifers significantly improved our water resilience, providing an additional water source when our capacity was extremely low.

The Tea Gardens aquifer supplies up to 9 million litres of water per day, serving over 2,000 homes and businesses in Tea Gardens and Hawks Nest. The Nahiack aquifer contributes between 6 and 10 million litres per day to the MidCoast water supply. As an important water resource for our existing and future residents, we must ensure our aquifers are protected.

What does this mean for rural land?

One of the major changes identified for rural lands will be the clear and consistent identification and management of our priority drinking water catchments, and our aquifer catchments in Nahiack and Tea Gardens.

The aquifer catchments will be rezoned from rural to Environmental Management, to ensure intensive plant and animal agriculture and other rural industries that may contaminate these water resources, will not be allowed.

ZONING IN ON RURAL

Our rural and natural lands contain a diverse range of resources and amenities that underpin our lifestyle and livelihoods.

Development in the MidCoast is currently guided by three different planning frameworks, which is why we're working to develop a consistent, region-wide framework. The Rural Strategy is one of the key elements required in developing the new Local Environmental Plan and Development Control Plan.

The draft Rural Strategy proposes a new framework for our waterways, rural and environmental lands, which cover around 95% of the MidCoast. These areas contain a diverse range of resources and amenities that are increasingly sought out for business, recreational and tourism uses.



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Protecting critical water sources:

By identifying priority drinking water and aquifer catchments, and zoning these areas appropriately, we can protect the quality and quantity of our water from the impacts of intensive land uses.

Development in the Environmental Management zone:

This zone still allows a range of activities that can currently occur in the rural zone, including:

- agricultural uses like the grazing of cattle, a dairy, crop production and bee keeping
- eco-tourist facilities, camping, bed and breakfast facilities
- a home business or home industry associated with a residence.

Planning controls are proposed to ensure that future development does not have any water quality impacts on the aquifer catchment.



Changes to waterway and waterbody management:

The extensive waterways and waterbodies throughout the MidCoast also make the mapping of river fronts, sensitive riparian lands and waterways challenging in terms of data management, accuracy and currency, particularly when waterways can move as a result of not only human interference, but significant weather events.

These issues impact on Council's ability to effectively implement the recommendations from catchment management plans and can affect assessment processes.

To ensure clear and consistent assessment and management of these issues in the future, our lakes, rivers, creeks and other significant waterways will only be identified in a waterway zone up to the tidal extent.

In all other areas, the waterway will be in the surrounding zone and a site-specific assessment will be applied to any development near a waterway or waterbody. Land subdivisions will not be allowed to create additional water frontages or water access licences.



Zoning in on our future

We're zoning in on the zones used across the MidCoast to develop a clear, consistent planning framework. It will guide the way we manage land use across the entire region.

The Rural Strategy is part of this overarching project and reviews our waterways, rural and environmental lands, which cover around 95% of the MidCoast. Find out more: haveyoursay.midcoast.nsw.gov.au