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Gwydir Valley farmers eager to obtain floodplain harvesting licence

Floodplain landholders in the Gwydir Valley have shown keen interest in obtaining a floodplain harvesting licence following calls for registration of interest late last year.

NSW Water Commissioner, David Harriss, said the NSW Office of Water had received 119 registrations from interested landholders covering 131 individual farms.

“All of the registrations received have now been initially assessed,” said Mr Harris.

“From the 119 registrations received, 92 are eligible for further detailed assessment, 17 require additional information before a determination can be made, while 10 have been deemed ineligible.”

Mr Harriss said that Gwydir Valley landholders were asked to register their interest in obtaining a floodplain harvesting licence as part of the Healthy Floodplains Project to improve the management of floodplain structures, as well as regulate and licence floodplain harvesting activities.

“The project will involve the issuing of licences and works approvals to ensure the sharing of floodplain water between farmers and the environment, together with the preparation of floodplain management plans to minimise flood risk and protect floodplain environments.”

“To be implemented over a five year period across northern valleys in NSW’s Murray Darling Basin - the Gwydir, Border Rivers, Namoi and Macquarie, and the unregulated Barwon-Darling River valley – Gwydir landholders were the first to be asked to register their interest,” Mr Harriss said.

Joe Robinson, Chairman of the Gwydir Valley Irrigators Association, said local irrigators were eager to participate and saw many benefits for both floodplain irrigators and the environment as a result of the project.

“The issuing of licences recognises the legitimacy of the current practice of floodplain irrigation and caps extraction to provide certainty for licensed use, both for production and the environment,” Mr Robinson said.

Mr Harriss said this process would also provide valuable information regarding the location, size and impact of floodplain structures, including floodplain storages, which will assist in the implementation of the NSW Floodplain Harvesting Policy.

“The next phase of the project for Gwydir landholders will see on-farm inspections on those properties that have been determined to be provisionally eligible for detailed assessment.”

“The Gwydir inspections are scheduled to be completed by September 2013.”

“Landholders that receive a floodplain harvesting licence will be guaranteed access to floodplain water and these licences will be able to be traded.”

“All floodplain harvesting activities in the project area will be incorporated into the NSW licensing framework by the end of June 2015,” Mr Harriss said.

The Healthy Floodplains project is a \$50 million NSW State Priority Project, funded by the Australian Government’s Water for the Future initiative.

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