

December 1992

Environs



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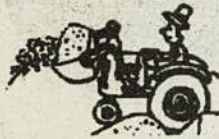
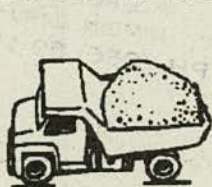
NIMBIN & RAINBOW NEWS
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IN THIS ISSUE:- Gravel Problems, New bores for Bongil Bongil?
NVCA report, Wetlands Test Case, Sewage on Coffs Beach

the north coast environment magazine



Nambucca River overexploited by



Ahe Nambucca Shire Council has a long history of showing undue favour towards gravel extraction in its shire, according to Councillor Lyn Orrego. Even to the extent that decisions to allow gravel extraction have been made repeatedly against Council's own code, against the Chief Town Planner's report and against environmental information presented to Council by Water Resources showing adverse effects on the river.

"The favour is mostly shown by the issuing of unsubstantiated recognition of 'existing-use-rights' for gravel extraction", she said.

To my knowledge, between February, 1988 and the present, Nambucca Shire Council has recognised at least 11 applications for recognition of 'existing use' and 'existing consent' rights for gravel extraction which have not been fully substantiated according to council's own Development Control Plan for Extractive Industries.

This is not to mention the 115 council operated sites for which the council is claiming 'existing use rights' but which seem to have no documentation of support in council files apart from a list which describes their approximate location in very loose terms (ie no maps, no quantities, no specific dates).

I do not wish to stop all gravel extraction in the shire, but to ensure extractive industry in this Shire only goes ahead if it complies with the law. In cases which cannot fully substantiate 'existing use' a Development

Application (DA) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be required. I believe this to be a reasonable and wise requirement since the effects of extraction, on a river or land, can be felt far from the actual pit site and by many other river and land users.

Most of the 'existing use rights' approvals were also against the recommendation of the Chief Town Planner. On January 18, 1990, council even voted against a general recommendation by the Chief Town Planner that Council should enforce its Develop Control Plan.

Also of great concern is that few of the applications established the intensity (ie quantities of gravel extracted from the operations in the past) but more importantly intensities were not included in the letter of approval. Many of the approvals were also vague regarding the location to which the recognition of the use applied.

An officer of the Department of Water Resources (DWR) has stated to me that it is a problem that the description of the site is often vague. DWR ask to sight the letter from Council recognising 'existing use' before they issue a permit for extraction. In some cases they simply do not know where Council has recognised and they never know the intensity recognised. The result, in our Shire is that multiple extraction sites (up to 128 were indicated in a Shires Association questionnaire of August 1992) are being mined with no assessment of their environmental impact.

I am concerned for the environment and the adverse effects gravel extraction is known to have on the river, where most extraction has historically occurred in our Shire. There is now a new phenomenon of extraction operations 'migrating' out of the river onto the flood plain and still claiming 'existing use' for those operations as well.

This phenomenon is probably due to a change in policy by DWR, made August 1988 as permits came up for renewal, by which permits now restrict operations to taking gravel from above the normal low flow level of the river (ie not allowing the largely unrestricted digging of holes as had been the case). DWR made this change after realising unrestricted extraction was partly the cause of a degradation (lowering) of the bed of the Nambucca river.

Gravel extraction is known to have adverse effects on rivers. In Germany, after years of extraction, taxpayers are now spending \$40 million dollars a year putting gravel back into the Rhine to restore its "bedload", (according to a DWR officer).

The environmental problems being caused by gravel extraction have been presented to Council directly by the DWR and to the community and Council at a public meeting last May. In late 1988 Mr Peter Wem, from DWR, addressed Council. He warned that the Nambucca River was beginning to show signs of degradation (or lowering) of the river bed - up to a metre in places - due to greater amounts

'existing-use-rights' gravel extraction



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of gravel being removed from upstream areas than are "mobile" in the river system. Scouring of the river banks and lowering of the water table has also been caused by taking out too much gravel, he said. He cited the examples of Tamworth; its river bed has been lowered 2-3 metres by over-extraction; the Clarence which is completely wrung out of gravel and the Tweed where there are no gravel extraction operations because the gravel is gone. His address was by way of warning regarding our river and was followed up by a request to Council for information regarding extraction sites within the shire which are in or near rivers. Council resolved not to answer the request. However, they have since complied.

More recently, on May 21, 1992, DWR Officers spoke to Council and the community at a public meeting in Bowraville. They said a recently com-

pleted consultants' Report (Resource Planning Pty Ltd) had concluded that parts of the Nambucca River have major lateral and vertical instability. This means the river in the lower Missabotti and North Arm areas (where many of the 'existing use' extraction sites are located) is widening and deepening, which is partly attributable to gravel extraction, according to Mr Alex Purviss a DWR officer.

The Consultants recommended no extraction below low flow level and only extraction above it where bank stabilisation works will be done at the same time and erosion of certain river bank spots would be alleviated. This recommendation has not yet been implemented by DWR but a Draft River Management Plan is due out very soon and it will be interesting to note if it is included therein.

To explain the controversy: Many locals believe gravel extraction is good for the river because on a site-by-site basis it can relieve immediate water pressure on the eroding, outside curve of a riverbank (usually eroding because of removal of vegetation) and this is acknowledged. Some also believe extraction will bring back the deep holes and fish which sadly have disappeared in recent years. But just digging out the holes will not work in the Nambucca because the holes can only be maintained by the water flow of the river. They were there originally because the channel was sufficiently narrow and the banks 'armoured' with vegetation so that there was enough force directed at the bed of the river to scour out any gravel that had built up in the holes.



not disappearing but...

The volunteers who produce *Environs* have decided to reduce the frequency of the magazine. This is primarily due to the commitment in time required of those of us producing and distributing *Environs*, has become too much for us to sustain monthly publication. Also we feel that we will fulfil *Environs* roll, just as well, with a reduced publication frequency.

We will now publish *Environs* every second month, (six issues per year). There will be no 'January' issue, the next edition will be the Feb/March. We plan to send this out to arrive in the mail at the beginning of February. We are maintaining the subscription cost of \$12-00 per year and hope you will bear with this effective 'price increase'. The cost of subscription has not changed now for a number of years, indeed the last change (I was told) was a decrease!

We are planning an increase in size from the usual 16 to 20 pages. We want to do this, feeling we need some extra space, to compensate, in

part, for the decreased frequency. Sometimes we have longer stories we would like to run but usually do not have the space, we would also be very happy to receive stories, especially local ones, or artwork for publication.

Any comment on what we are doing or offers of help, in any capacity are welcome. We still aim to bring you the up-to-date local environmental news together with a coverage of related 'green' issues. And would like to thank you for your ongoing support.

Mike H.



Nambucca gravel (cont.)

However, what many fail to acknowledge is that gravel extraction generally and for the river as a whole is NOT good because it removes some of the "bed load" of the system thus making water during wet times flow faster and so cause more scouring of riverbanks. As the Hon Ian Causely, Minister for Natural Resources, said when he launched the River Care pamphlets and introduced a DWR video in our shire in July 1992, "it shows how important sand and gravel in the bed of a river is to dissipate the energy of the river."

In essence I believe the effort some people are putting into avoiding environmental assessment of gravel operations in our valley is against the community interest of looking after our river. The State Minister for Planning, Mr Robert Webster also seems to support this path of avoidance. A State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP) may soon be brought out giving 'existing use' quarries two years grace to 'get legal' by putting in development applications.

Nambucca Shire Council, at their November meeting accepted legal advice given to the DWR that it could be argued that gravel extraction for the purpose of river maintenance, even if the gravel was sold, was not primarily an industry and so wouldn't need an EIS or DA.

A North Coast Extractive Industries Forum will discuss this "issue that is not likely to go away in a hurry" on December 10 in Coffs Harbour. It is being organised by NCROC and NOROC, for bookings phone (066) 512 511.

Lyn Orrego

Endangered Fauna (Interim Protection) Amendment Bill

GREENS OUTRAGED Forestry Commission privileged again!

The Endangered Fauna (Interim Protection) Act, due to expire on Dec 1, now needs to be extended as it has not been replaced by the (withdrawn) Natural Resources Package. The peak environment groups support the extension of the Act which will allow the preparation of comprehensive endangered species legislation next year.


The amendment bill - for the extension - is due to be debated in Parliament as ENVIRONS goes to press, and if passed, extends it until October 1993. Within this is a Clause 4 which exempts the Forestry Commission from presenting Fauna Impact Statements (FISs). The expiry of the 1 December deadline would have required the Forestry Commission to present those FISs prepared and/or to justify their inaction or lack of action in those areas where no FISs have been prepared. This requirement would not now be necessary.

"Once again Forestry Commission has been singled out for special



treatment under the laws of this state. Clause 4 represents a further corruption of environmental controls and public accountability to suit the interests of the Commission and a subsidised forest industry", said Sid Walker, executive officer of the NSW Nature Conservation Council.

"If the Commission has not been able to comply with the Director's conditions requiring public mechanisms of accountability then it needs to come clean publicly and request extension on a case by case basis" said Sue Salmon, NSW campaign director for the Australian Conservation Foundation.




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NVCA... use it!

**Nambucca Valley Conservation Association.... a
fully comprehensive environmental organisation.**

...from the president's report.

With the use of our office and it's equipment, the Nambucca Valley Conservation Association has developed into a fully comprehensive environmental organisation. We have also become incorporated.

Our office gives access to the computer, phone, fax, files and library, and has assisted greatly in providing a venue for work on the many subjects we have covered this past year. It is a place to actually produce submissions, letters etc, have them fine-tuned on the computer, printed out on the printer and either posted, or if urgent, faxed that day, giving almost instant communication. The wonders of modern technology can be used positively! If important phone calls need to be made, our phone is available. Similarly, our membership with the 'Pegasus' computer environmental network enables us to keep up to date with environmental issues locally, state-wide, nationally and internationally. 'ENVIRONS', our excellent newsletter and magazine, uses it regularly.

We subscribe to numerous publications, and purchase informative and entertaining books whenever we can, to keep our library up to date. The office is also a place where projects such as photographic displays, information displays for schools etc. and any other projects that members may wish to pursue, can be carried out and stored for future use. Finally, it is the place where "Environs" information is gathered and edited before being sent to Wauchope for layout and

typesetting. When it comes back from the printer, our office is the place where it is assembled, folded, addressed and finally posted out to subscribers and distributors.

This all costs a substantial amount. It is your membership fees and subscriptions to 'ENVIRONS' as well as fund raising ventures during the year that enable us to maintain the office so that our ongoing efforts to protect and conserve the environment can continue. I thank you for your contribution and urge you to introduce more people to our organisation. This will enable us to expand and do more. The environment movement is one of the few areas where growth really is good.

Throughout the year, a small and hard working group of people have kept the wheels of the Association running smoothly, and I thank them for their dedication. Many issues required and received direct attention from them in the form of either submissions, letter writing, lobbying, nomination for membership or attending meetings. Other members have contributed in different ways, and I thank you all for your help.

With our new office facilities available, I encourage more members to become active in helping to preserve our fragile environment. It need not be a huge commitment. Writing letters is a very effective way of influencing the decision makers, be they local, state or federal authorities. Letters-to-the-Editor and Press Releases are also useful. We can help you express your opinions and feelings in

this way, and do something to change things for the better at the same time.

Voluntary environment groups such as ourselves are all that stand in the way of open slather development, mining, logging, gravel extraction, etc. - with no consideration for the ecological consequences. So I urge everybody to look at what time you have available, what skills or knowledge you possess and put them together towards an issue that you have some interest in. Then, by using our office facilities, you will be able to achieve something worthwhile and help the environment at the same time.

It's been quite a year, with much pressure from powerful opposing forces. But I feel that we have achieved a great deal, and have held our own.

The coming year is bound to be full of surprises; some good, some not so good. I am looking forward to being involved in the continuous changes that have to take place for *ecologically sustainable living* to be a reality.

Thank you.

Philip Margolis (president.)

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WETLAND DESTRUCTION



The North Coast Environment Council (NCEC) is very disturbed by the apparent unwillingness of the Minister for Planning, the Hon. R J Webster, to uphold the EP & A Act and the SEPP 14 provisions, as the legislation applies to the Wetland No 54, at Pottsville, Tweed Shire.

State Environment Planning Policy (SEPP) 14, Wetland No 54, is situated west of the township of Pottsville. The wetland, comprised mainly of Melaleuca forest with some heath and sedgelands, is at the foot of the hills running north-south about one and a half kilometres from the coast. The wetland is part owned by ex-councillor Mr Krekelberg, who is the principal of the Pottsville Waters Canal Estate and by the Tagget family.

The development of the canal estate commenced in 1982 with unapproved major excavations, described by the developer's consultants as a "drainage ditch". Approvals were signed retrospectively by the Minister for Planning. The Tagget family have been steadily draining and clearing the melaleuca forest for some years without the required development consent. It was the illegal clearing and draining which prompted Tweed Shire Council to prosecute the Taggets in the Land and Environment Court in 1990. Further unauthorised clearing was undertaken circa. July 23, 1992, shortly before the final judgement was handed down by Justice Banon. Banon J determined that restitution of certain drains and considerable areas of the wetland should be undertaken by the Taggets, and that any work on

the "BLM" line of drainage would require development consent.

From comments made by the current Minister for Planning, Robert Webster, in the Legislative Council on October 15, that he favours lowering of the bund wall [barrier wall which controls the rate of outflow of fresh water from the Wetland], to better facilitate drainage and that he intends to review the SEPP 14 classification of the wetland, and the withdrawal of support for legal aid to Tweed Shire Council, it appears that the Minister is in tacit, even explicit, agreement with the Taggets, and is not prepared to properly administer the EP & A Act, and the SEPP 14 provisions. In other words, he seems to condone the unapproved preemptive drainage works and degradation caused by the Taggets.

Since the judgement was handed down, more unsanctioned clearing and excavation was done during October. Further bulldozing has also occurred in the wetland land under the guise of bush fire back-burning requirements. Clearly the owners are thumbing their noses at government, the relevant legislation, and are in contempt of the Land and Environment Court.

With the National Farmers Federation backing the Taggets' challenge to the Land and Environment Court decision, Wetland No 54 could well become a test case on the enforceability of SEPP 14 legislation which was introduced in 1987 to protect valuable wetlands throughout NSW.



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NCEC believe the 'right to farm' argument of the NSW Farmers' Federation is specious because the ultimate reason for the destruction of Wetland No 54 is probably to pave the way for residential development. Certainly this is the unabashed ambition of the easterly neighbour, Mr Krekelberg, and the Taggets have made submissions to the Residential Development Strategy planning process, to have parts of their land released for residential purposes. The economic feasibility of Wetland 54 for farming is dubious, whilst the ecological destruction in the face of continued unauthorised clearing, draining and burning is beyond doubt.

The impotence and unwillingness of local and state governments to uphold SEPP 14 provisions and the rulings of the Land and Environment Court, is shameful and scandalous, given the public's expectations of proper environmental protection for coastal wetlands. Financial compensation via rate relief and tax concessions, may be one way of providing a carrot for landholders to observe government legislation and guidelines. The stick has been broken and burnt. What does the Department of Planning intend to do about SEPP 14 Wetlands and Coastal policies? Why have court rulings if they are flaunted? Why have a Department of Planning?

from: TREE Magazine Dec 1992 by Paul Hopkins of NCEC

RECYCLING

‘The trouble with recycling is that it clouds the issue’

It enables people to believe that they have done something about the waste they generate, to assuage any guilt that they might otherwise have felt about their consumption, and gives them tacit permission to continue to live in exactly the same way.

The world needs to conserve its resources. Too many people believe that recycling paper, glass or metal answers that need. Sadly, while recycling undoubtedly helps a little, recycling alone is approaching the problem from the wrong end. Like papering over the cracks in the walls of a building with crumbling foundations instead of fixing the foundations.

The first priority on the agreed waste management hierarchy is waste minimisation. The next priority is re-using overall waste, and with very low additional costs in terms of energy and resources - although even for, say, refilling bottles there is an extra burden in the form of the energy

needed to transport them and to operate the cleaning plant plus the water needed for washing them.

The current worldwide fashionable and almost total concentration on collecting waste materials for possible recycling diverts attention from crucial policies which would reduce initial resource use, and minimise energy consumption. Hopefully the new wave of life-cycle analysis programmes will help us all ensure that we actually waste less - by selecting products which consume least materials in the first place. Minimising the amount of waste going for disposal certainly prolongs the life of landfills. But is that what we really need to do?

The best way to manage waste of any kind is simply not to produce it in the first place!

from Warmer Bulletin, No 34
August 1992

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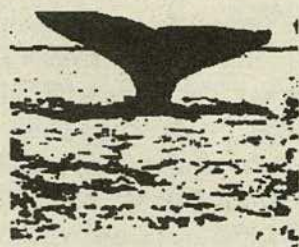
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No inexhaustable resource No limitless dumping ground



As a young boy, going to the beach was part of my life. I developed a love for the ocean that has never left me. I surfed the East Coast and knew the sheer joy of riding clean waves between bush-covered headlands; it is a unique part of the Australian experiences we all enjoy.

But even then for as much unspoiled, almost awesome beauty we saw up and down the coast we could already see clearly that year by year ugliness was creeping in. *And the pace of change is quickening.*

Peter Garrett:

The Australian Conservation Foundation has just commenced a major campaign for the long term protection of Australia's coastal areas.

Our 70,000km of coastal fringe is home to over 80% of our population. To continue on the present path of ad-hoc urban expansion and development, overfishing, unchecked industrial effluent and sewage disposal, and habitat destruction, will lead to an aesthetically and ecologically impoverished coastline. Not an ideal scenario for what is considered as the nation's favourite recreational area.

For too long the sea has been viewed as an inexhaustible resource and a limitless dumping ground. A

study by UNE showed that not one of New South Wales' 81 estuaries along the coast was unpolluted. CSIRO calculated that 60% of coastal wetlands in southern and eastern Australia have been lost through clearing or filling, tourism or urbanisation. Pollution generated on land and the fall-out of airborne pollutants constitute 80% of global marine pollution.

The vast majority of the ocean's known biological wealth is concentrated in the 8% of the earth's surface known as the Coastal Zone. However apart from the Great Barrier Reef, less than 1% of Australia's marine environment is protected.

The ACF is deeply concerned about this degradation. You can help us, particularly if you live by the sea. If you have expertise in coastal and

marine issues, contact Margaret McDonald on (03) 4161 166 about how you can be involved. But a generous donation will enable us to research each of our campaign objectives thoroughly. We may then stand at least an even chance of winning against the many self-seeking interests which threaten this fragile environment.

Send to ACF, 340 Gore Street, Fitzroy, Victoria 3065.



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Bores to extract water beneath Bongil Bongil

Coffs Harbour City Council has a proposal for a borefield at Bonville South to supplement the city's water supply. An Environmental Impact Statement has been done and was on display until December 11.

The proposal is to place 2 bores and 25 spear points into the coastal dune swales east of Pine Creek and south of Bonville Creek. The pumps will be powered with eight 20KVA diesel generators plus one 600A main pump generator. These bores will extract 6 megalitres (ML) of fresh water daily from an aquifer (lens of fresh water) beneath the proposed Bongil Bongil Coastal National Park. Pumping of water is expected for up to six months of the year for five years.

The estimated cost of the borefield is \$1.8M with a life-expectancy of 5 years.

Spokesperson for the Coffs Harbour National Support Group, Dr Alan Lloyd said, "The irony is that in March 1992 the Council resolved to support the Bongil Bongil National

Park on the same site. Our view is that Council should consider more seriously water augmentation which is environmentally sensitive, such as the need to conserve water, recycle treated sewage and encourage household domestic water tanks. To us, it is madness to spend \$2M on a noisy, environmentally destructive water scheme which is claimed to be temporary."

The environmental value of the area is well documented. It is one of four most important littoral rainforests left in NSW. It is a dune-swale system with hanging wetlands, not represented elsewhere in scientific reserves. It is rich in rare and endangered species. Within the aquifer area there are six SEPP14 wetlands and a mosaic of seven different forest types.

The flora have developed over a long time in a fire-free environment and this is reflected in the abundance of epiphytes. The EIS claims that the nine diesel generators, each with their own stored fuel, will not significantly increase the fire risk.

"The EIS states that the borefield is unlikely to have a significant impact on endangered fauna. This is somewhat surprising given the increased human activity and that the bores may pump 24 hours a day for up to six months in one year", said Dr Lloyd. (One generator is estimated by the EIS to have a noise level of 103dB).

Computer modelling in the EIS states that the water table around the bores will be lowered by 1.5metres which will take one week of pumping

at the extraction rate of 6ML per day. After that, according to the EIS, the water table will stabilise as saline water encroaches from the sides of the aquifer and displaces fresh water upwards. "This is an assumption based on unknown modelling. It is assumed that saline water will remain layered beneath the fresh water and that this separation will prevent undue damage by salinity," said Alan Lloyd.

The fresh water will be pumped out mainly in the dry period of the year and given that the summer rains arrive as predicted, the aquifer should be replenished. However, as stated in the EIS, this replenishment takes 8-9 months and there is no lateral input of fresh water it is entirely dependent on rainfall.

The EIS notes that the vegetation will be drought stressed during the lowering of the water table but it is assumed that this water stress during the 2-3 months of the dry season will not adversely affect most of the vegetation. It is claimed in the EIS that most vegetation is tolerant to drought conditions and that pumping will be regulated through monitoring water levels and indicator plants.

"We are told that botanists from UNE will travel regularly to Coffs Harbour to monitor vegetation. The project is an exercise in 'risk management' whereby the proponents of the scheme claim that they will minimise the risk factors. But will they?" said Dr LLoyd.

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Environment group wins court costs

The Caldera Environment Centre has won the first two rounds of a Land and Environment Court Appeal against Forest Hill Resort.

In the Land and Environment Court Justice Stein has recently rejected an application by Tweed Shire Council and Digital Enterprises to require the Environment Centre provide security of costs before the case on the legality of Council's approval for the resort proceeds.

This follows an earlier decision of Justice Stein against attempts by Council and Digital to have the court subpoena information on the private financial affairs of individual members of the environment centre.

In a judgement which was handed down in Sydney on 25 September, the Justice pointed out that "the resort complex... involves the erection of 29 buildings located in an Environmental Protection (Scenic/Escarpment) zone" and that "this is some indication of the sensitivity of the land and environs".

He went on to say that the proceedings initiated by the Caldera Environment Centre "raise important issues relating to the enforcement of planning laws and [their] case has arguable merit".

More directly in relation to the security of costs issue, the Justice said that "while the capacity of the [Environment Centre] to pay costs is a very relevant factor, mere impecuniosity will not necessarily lead to an order for security".

The Justice added that "there is no certainty that the applicant will be ordered to pay costs if unsuccessful, given the public interest nature of the litigation".

In relation to the hearing on the application for security of costs, Justice Stein ordered costs against the Tweed Shire Council and Digital Enterprises.

Co-ordinator for the Caldera Environment Centre, Paul Hopkins, said he is heartened by the Courts' decision.

He said, "this judgement confirms the right of public interest groups with minimal resources to challenge council on its administration of planning laws when there are good environmental reasons".

He added, "now that we have overcome attempts by the Tweed Shire Council and Digital Enterprises to exhaust our resolve and disqualify us on technicalities, we look forward to the court dealing with the original issues of our challenge."

North Coast Population Monitor

According to the Department of Planning's North Coast Population and Development Monitor of July 1992 it estimates the Nambucca Shire's population of June 1992 as 17,340 persons.

The actual growth rate of 1.9% of the North Coast Regions has dropped compared to the previous year (2.2%). The average between July 1986 to June 1992 being 2.3%. Of the seventeen local government areas only six experienced any increase in their growth rate. Nambucca Shire increased its growth rate from 2.5% (1990-91) to 4.4% in the last year followed by Maclean, Richmond River, Hastings and Ulmarra. Grafton after stabilising its population in 1990-91 has a growth rate of 0.1% from 1991-92.

Outright the Tweed Shire experienced the greatest increase in population between July '91 and June '92 (1,830 extra people), followed by Hastings (960), Nambucca (730), Ballina and Coffs Harbour (570 each). Nambucca Shire experienced the highest growth on the North Coast over

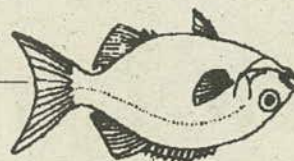
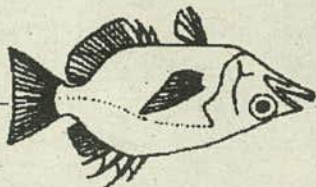
the last 12 months of 4.4% per annum (average 1.9%).

In over half of the local government areas on the North Coast, building approvals increased this year. However Coffs Harbour, Lismore and Copmanhurst showed substantial decreases. Tweed and Hastings have remained relatively stable, as have Byron, Kempsey Maclean and Bellingen.

Tweed (1,059) and Hastings (784) had the highest number of dwelling approvals. Others with relatively high approvals were Coffs Harbour (415), Lismore (380), Byron (347) and Nambucca (315). The reason for the high number of building approvals for Nambucca is partly due to the approval of 80 dwellings which were developed for the Department of Housing.

With such growth occurring it brings about the importance of having strict, controlled and sensible environmental standards. Appropriate zonings with regard for environmental considerations taking into account all matters affecting or likely to affect the environment are essential.

Raw Sewage on Coffs Beaches



Claims of raw sewage from the Coffs Harbour area's outfalls continue. This time reports of sewage pollution from the Coffs Harbour outfall come from well known yachtsman, Mr Ken Carter. Mr Carter and his wife, Pat, have been coming to Coffs Harbour for many years, but this year may be their last unless something is done to clean up the mess.

"Long weekends and holiday times are the worst, you can always smell the sewage after a long weekend when there is a southerly wind, the stink is awful," he said. "The PWD and council always deny raw sewage is discharged, but an engineer was at the marina one day and I pointed it out to him, he was amazed but had to admit it was sewage."

"There was a brown plume of sewage covered in froth coming past

the harbour entrance, some flowing into the harbour and the rest going in the direction of Park Beach, there was just no way he could deny it," said Mr Carter. Mr Carter's claim was backed up by local yachtsman and environmentalist, Mr Richard Clowes, who said the currents that come in through the entrance and leave through holes in the north breakwater not only carry in the sand that is silting up the harbour but also bring in the sewage.

"These currents are eddies of the counter current, a north flowing current that runs inshore of the south-going East Australia Current, couple this with south-east winds, an incoming tide, and the outfall dumping effluent into the ocean at The Gallows, and you have sewage flowing into the harbour," he said.

"I've seen the same thing at Boambee Head, while collecting data

for a research paper. The Sawtell outfall was discharging late in the afternoon on an incoming tide, a stinking, frothy, brown plume of effluent flowed northward around the point, some went into Boambee Creek where children were swimming, the rest went north along Boambee beach, which may be the reason so many fishermen were there.

"I have no doubt these discharges are causing health problems with swimmers and surfers, my own children have been victims after swimming at Jetty Beach, one of them required hospital treatment as a result," said Mr Clowes. He also said the problem at Sawtell reverses itself when the wind blows from the north, "Quite often when there is a nor-east wind blowing there is an oily brown scum that brings back memories of a washing machine full of dirty nappies slopping onto Sawtell Beach and on a number of occasions I have seen used condoms and other personal hygiene products at the high-tide mark."

The last word went to Mr Carter who said it was no good trying to pretend there was no problem, outfalls were costing the town a lot of money.

"Yachties coming to Coffs Harbour bring a lot of money into this town. Some years ago, before the problem got as bad as it has, this marina used to be crowded with yachts each summer, but look at it now, there are lots of empty berths and there will be another one when we leave," said Mr Carter as he and his wife loaded supplies onto their boat.

from Holiday Coast Times

Anti-outfall coalition

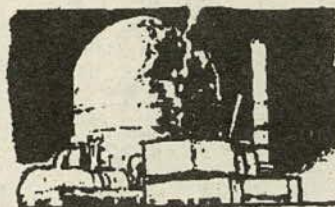
Public outcry against ocean outfalls polluting the NSW coastline is growing. With Coffs Harbour City Council still trying to rezone Look-At-Me-Now Headland to allow an outfall and Ballina Shire Council's recent approval of an outfall for Lennox Head, community groups in both areas have banded together to form a coalition.

A year has passed since 250 people were arrested for protesting against the planned outfall at Look-At-Me-Now Headland. Charges against the protesters have now been dropped, providing they do not take action

against the police for costs. Ballina Shire Council have approved sewage pipelines from Lennox Head to an enlarged sewage treatment plant and outfall at Skennars Head which will discharge two million litres of effluent per day. In October, residents of Ballina, Lennox Head and Byron Bay, who have been campaigning for the closure of the Skennars Head outfall, organised a rally against ocean outfalls.

The Coalition Against Ocean Outfalls Inc can be contacted through the mid north coast branch of Surfrider Foundation, PO Box 1822, Coffs Harbour, 2450.

Nuclear 'war' - not over yet



The Federal Government is to find a site to be the national nuclear waste dump. The site will take low and intermediate radioactive wastes from medical, industrial and military activities (such as mineral sands tailings and contaminated soil from Maralinga). The chosen site might also become the storage depot for high level radioactive wastes (possibly the spent nuclear fuel rods currently stored at Lucas Heights).

The Federal Government has also announced a "Research Reactor Review" into the need for a new research reactor for Australia. This reactor would take over the job of the present HIFAR facility at Lucas Heights. Reasons given for the need for a new reactor are the production of medical and industrial radio-isotopes; research; to enable Australia to take part in the global nuclear industry and fulfill its safeguards role (because we are an uranium exporter) and, finally, to allow us to take an active role in the expanding nuclear programmes in South East Asia (such as Indonesia's reactor programme).

The terms of reference for the "Research Reactor Review" are as follows:

1. Whether, on review of the benefits and costs for scientific, commercial, industrial and national interest reasons, Australia has a need for a new nuclear research reactor.

2. A review of the present reactor, HIFAR, to include an assessment of the national and commercial benefits and costs of HIFAR operations; its likely remaining useful life and its eventual closure and decommissioning.

3. If the finding on 1. above is that Australia has a need for a new nuclear research reactor, the Review will consider possible locations for a new reactor, its environmental impact at alternative locations, recommend a preferred location, and evaluate matters associated with regulation of the facility and organisational arrangements for reactor-based research.

In assessing the environmental impacts of the facility, the Review will take account of the objectives of the Environment Protection (Impact of Proposals) Act 1974, as amended. In this regard the Review will schedule public hearings and call for submissions from any interested parties by advertisements in major newspapers.

Greenpeace has expressed several concerns about the nature of the inquiry/review and its terms of reference. They say that matters such as costs and siting the reactor cannot be considered separately. Nor is it realistic to consider the potential benefits of a reactor without considering environmental impacts, particularly those of accidents or waste disposal. It seems that various officials have given indi-

cations that important issues will not be covered, such as insurance for damages following an accident, eventual decommissioning of the new reactor and the costs of dealing with the current and future stockpiles of the highly radioactive spent fuel rods.

Greenpeace point out that the Review does not have the full powers that an "inquiry" would, such as those to compel the production of documents or to subpoena witnesses. They say that *It is vital that interested groups and members of the public take the opportunity to be heard on this issue.*

The "Review's" secretariat can be contacted on (02) 2560936, or written to at: The Secretariat, Research Reactor Review, GPO Box 9839, Sydney, NSW 2001, for information on how to make a submission.

The Friends of the Earth (FOE), Sydney, say that the Australian government is allowing only a month and half for public submissions to the government review board in an attempt to bulldoze through the new research reactor proposal. If successful, the reactor will likely be built on the site of an older research

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reactor just 1.6 kilometres from residential housing.

Organisations and people working in the peace, nuclear and energy fields, are requested to lobby the Australian government to extend the closing date for submissions beyond 18 December 1992.

Murray Matson from the "Movement Against Uranium Mining" said: "Everywhere in the world the nuclear industry requires a bit of a leg-up to get over public scrutiny and they just got it here with this absurd early closing date for comment. The average Australian has only until the 18th of December this year to decide whether we remain at the nuclear party."

Mr Matson called the review's terms of reference unfair. He said, "the review states that the crucial decision on a new reactor will be limited to 'scientific, commercial, industrial and national' reasons. The environmental impact, choice of location and regulation of the reactor will be addressed only after and if it gets a go ahead. This caters to the interests of the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation and against community bodies like the Sutherland Shire which already hosts the old reactor and is targeted for the new one."

Greenpeace Press Release and Friends of the Earth, Sydney PR

FISH RESEARCH UPDATE

The Minister for Natural Resources, the Hon Ian Causley, has written to Nambucca Shire Council to explain the current position of Fisheries' Northern Rivers Research Program.

He said that the primary studies were carried out in the Richmond and Clarence rivers and that the report is now nearing completion. Regarding the smaller projects involving fish tagging in the Bellinger, Macleay and Nambucca Rivers, and recreational anglers studies in the Macleay and Bellinger rivers, the collected data is now undergoing analysis and the results will also be published. No specific dates were mentioned.

Mr Causley said that the information would be used in the preparation of Fisheries Management Plans for both the commercial and recreational fisheries. These will not be for each estuary but for each of the major commercial species.

Nambucca Shire council will write back to the Minister to ask when the research will be completed on the Nambucca River to the stage where

concerns raised at public meetings (such as netting the river) may be addressed.

"With the feeling long-standing in our community that fish stocks aren't what they used to be, a view supported by many elderly fishermen, it is good to see the Council keeping this issue alive with the Minister," said Councillor Lyn Orrego "even though it's all moving so, so slowly."

"The recent announcement that the Rock Lobster catch will be controlled from July '93 with a tagging system (set number of tags, tags bought by fishermen and attached to lobster to make sale legal) is a great thing and will be more and more the way of the near future. Apart from complaints from the industry regarding the price of the tags I hope the industry is sensible enough to realise that control of the harvest will ensure it is there in perpetuity for fishermen into the future", she said.

For background refer to: ENVIRONS August 1992 article re overfishing)



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So much for the zone

The ozone hole has arrived earlier, larger, and thinner over Antarctica this year. Up until now, the term "ozone hole" really referred to a severe thinning of the ozone layer - not an actual hole. But now, for the first time, probes have found areas over the South Pole where there is NO OZONE at all. The ozone that IS there is 80% thinner than usual, and the thinned area extends 9 million square miles, as compared to 6.2 million square miles last year.

A Scientific Assessment, prepared earlier this year by more than 100 leading atmospheric scientists from 28 countries, disclosed that the ozone layer is being depleted at an even faster rate than predicted. It is being depleted at both high and mid-latitudes, in both hemispheres, and not only in winter, but in spring and summer. Depletion now covers North America, a large part of South America, nearly the whole of Europe, Australia and New Zealand. The only areas not affected are the tropics.

Researchers attributed the increased severity in part to weather but mostly to higher levels of man-made chemicals called chlorofluorocarbons, or CFCs, in the atmosphere.

"What we are looking at is ozone depletion caused by CFCs that were released back in 1987 and 1988," said F Sherwood Rowland, a chemistry professor at the University of California, who, with a co-researcher, first reported in 1974 that CFCs could deplete the ozone layer. "The expectation is that it will probably continue

to get worse in the stratosphere for another decade or so."

"Where it goes depends on the meteorology of each year," Rowland said. "You won't know until it happens whether the air with low ozone (over Antarctica) goes up through the Pacific and not over inhabited places or whether it goes up over Australia or South America or Africa." For example, in 1987, the ozone-depleted air broke up and moved over Melbourne, Australia, in midsummer.

Without the ozone layer, life as we know it would not have developed on this planet. And without it, life as we know it will not continue. Without the ozone layer, there is no protection from the sun's ultraviolet rays, which are too strong for most life on the planet.

Increased levels of UV radiation cause skin cancer, vision difficulties such as cataracts and retinal damage, and suppress the immune system.

The rate of skin cancer has doubled in the last decade to become the 8th most commonly diagnosed cancer.

We human beings can protect ourselves to some degree via sunscreens, UV-protective sunglasses, hats, protective clothing, staying indoors, and improved nutrition. Plants and animals can't. Cases have already been reported of blinded animals in the southern hemisphere and reduced phytoplankton growth, which is at the base of the food chain. We can expect crop damage.

"For economic reasons, the National Aeronautics and Space Admin-

istration has begun considering whether to shut down a satellite that can enable researchers to give people as much as a week's notice of dangerous ozone reductions", Rowland said. "I think it would be a big mistake," he added.

Ozone depletion is caused by man-made chemicals - CFCs, HCFCs, halon, and bromine compounds that travel to the stratosphere and break down the ozone. They are used in refrigerators and air conditioners, electronic cleaning solvents, insulation and furniture foam, some cosmetics, fabric protectors, pesticides and fire extinguishers. Eliminating these chemicals is do-able: Sweden reduced its CFC use by 80% between 1988 and 1991. Germany has enacted legislation to phase out ozone-damaging compounds 5-12 years earlier than required by the Montreal Protocol, (the international group that establishes standards for halting ozone depletion). Also in Germany, a completely CFC-free fridge, using propane and butane, is about to come onto the market.



In their book, *New World, New Mind*, Robert Ornstein and Paul Ehrlich write that human beings evolved over millions of years to deal with environments and living conditions that were fairly stable, and we evolved some pretty effective ways of coping. But in the last 200 years, we

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have so drastically altered the physical environment, our lifestyles, and our social structures, that those coping mechanisms simply no longer serve us. For one thing, most of us live almost totally in an artificial environment cut off from nature.

Our coping methods are not geared for the long-term. We cannot see the ozone layer. We cannot see it deteriorating,

we cannot see the effects of that deterioration immediately, and when those effects do come - like skin cancer, the connection between our affliction and our car air conditioner, the pesticides on our food, the head cleaner for our stereo, etc. is tenuous - intellectual - if we're aware of it at all.

And though we've only come up with all these neat gadgets - refrigerators, air conditioners, computers, etc. - in the last 200 years - life seems unlivable without them - so it's another stretch to acknowledge their connection to the invisible threat of ozone depletion.

What is happening now is far worse than scientists predicted back then. Ozone depletion is occurring more rapidly and over greater areas than scientists had forecast

because that's the majority reaction, and we don't have to change anything - things don't look any different after all - despite the fact that the morning papers read like the daily log in a mental institution.

We can react with despair - for, in the words of Sherwood Rowland, the scientist who first realised that chlorofluorocarbons would destroy the ozone layer, "My work is going very well; unfortunately, it means the Earth is dying."

And we can react with rage at the government and businesses that are not taking the obvious necessary actions.

These are normal reactions. And they are our tools - our grief and our rage. It is necessary to experience

them - and we will experience them over and over again. But we can't get stuck in them. We have to transmute our grief and our rage into positive action.

We need to make an evolutionary leap in consciousness to train our old minds to deal with the new world.

We must keep pressuring government and industry to stop the madness. We must support the work of environmental groups, such as Greenpeace which has launched a major attack on DuPont as the main producer of CFCs.

On the local level, we need to educate ourselves about the products in our lives that involve ozone-depleting chemicals. We have to stop buying them. We have to stop using them. Then we have to educate our friends to stop buying and using them and store owners to stop selling them. We need to request legislation that prohibits their use and purchase.

Let's care for the environment - life depends on it.

From Conferences on Pegasus Network

Recycling office buildings?

A forty-one floor office block, built only eighteen years ago, is being recycled in a ten-month operation which is the first on such a massive scale in the southern hemisphere. The 'old' Legal and General Insurance tower, in Sydney's central business district, is making way for a new tower. Almost all the materials from the building are being recycled: the concrete and its reinforcing steel, non-ferrous metals and window glass.

Warner Bulletin



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THIS MONTH'S COVER

Scarlet Honeyeater - *Myzomela sanguinolenta*
and **Weeping Bottlebrush** - *Callistemon viminalis*

I had two reasons for choosing these two subjects for the December cover - firstly, we've been having frequent visits from the scarlet honeyeaters to the bottlebrushes in our bird garden and secondly, we wanted something red to add some Christmas colour to ENVIRONS this month (all hand coloured by our office helpers!)

The tiny scarlet honeyeater is one of our smallest and also most beautiful birds - often seen feeding on nectar producing shrubs and trees, including the weeping bottlebrush which matches its colouring so well it's often difficult to see the male birds amongst the flowers. The female is an inconspicuous olive brown with a red wash to the chin. Scarlet honeyeaters have a melodious clear tinkling song. The young are usually fed on insects until they fledge.

Weeping bottlebrush occurs naturally along streambanks on the coast and tablelands of Queensland and Northern NSW. It can reach 20 metres in height, but in a garden situation it's more usual as a shrub, attracting many nectar feeding birds including Lorikeets.

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Environs is published every other month on a voluntary basis to bring together reports from a large number of environmental organisations. Many groups are affiliated with Environs, including the Bellingen Environment Centre, and the Nambucca Valley Conservation Association.

Editorial contributions are welcomed. They should include the authors name and phone number and should be sent by mail to: Environs, PO Box 123, Bowraville 2449, or by fax to (065) 647 808, or by email to: peg:environs. Subscriptions are \$12 for 6 issues. Advertisements may be lodged with Julie Mozsny by phoning (065) 695 360. Editorial for Environs is by Carol Margolis and the Environs team. Layout and typesetting is by Mike Holland. Cover artwork is by Julie Mozsny.

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