

## 7. ECO-INFO - WETLANDS INFORMATION SHEET

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### WYONG'S VITAL WETLANDS

#### THE VALUE OF WETLANDS

Wyong's wetlands are an important part of a natural system which slows the flow of water to the Tuggerah Lakes. In so doing they:

- Control flood levels
- Maintain stream flow through dry periods.
- Filter out sediments and rubbish which would otherwise clog our lakes and beaches.
- Absorb nutrients which would increase weed growth in the waterways and lakes.

In addition to these direct benefits, wetlands provide many secondary values including:

- Fish breeding grounds.
- Habitat for a diverse range of plant and animal species.
- Natural scenic values.
- Educational and recreational.



Wetlands are a vital resource for the Shire. They cannot be viewed as "waste land" of no value except for dumping and filling. They work 24 hours a day and require remarkably little maintenance or care, but can be destroyed unintentionally through many activities.

#### WETLANDS UNDER THREAT

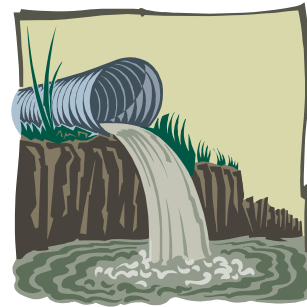
Wetlands are a natural system and are constantly changing. Water levels rise and

fall. Sediment is deposited by stream flow. Too much change, however, can have a negative effect. The main impacts on wetlands are:

- Filling
- Clearing
- Drainage
- Fire
- Excessive flooding
- Pollution

Wyong's wetlands have changed considerably since European settlement. Trees have been removed, and some wetland areas have been

drained. Fertilisers and chemicals, if used excessively, quickly flow into the wetlands causing environmental degradation. Fires, frequently started by vandals or escaping from backyard incinerators or burn-offs, have also caused major harm. The local wetland can also become a dumping ground for cars, grass clippings, building rubble, old appliances, left-over garden chemicals or even raw sewage from non-maintained septic tanks.



In addition, there have been efforts to subdivide and sell wetland areas to unsuspecting buyers. This has led to heartbreak and flooding problems, or the need for costly flood control works.

The long term effects of these multiple impacts is now becoming evident. Throughout New South Wales, some 60% of wetlands have disappeared since European settlement.

#### NSW GOVERNMENT AND WETLANDS

In 1986, the New South Wales Government recognised the importance of wetlands with State Environmental Planning Policy No 14 (SEPP 14). This identified key coastal wetlands of State significance including 28 in Wyong Shire.

A development application in SEPP 14 Wetlands must be accompanied by an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). EIS's are required to be prepared in accordance with the statutory procedures outlined in the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979. The legislation ensures that the likely effects of development on wetlands are properly considered, whilst allowing land owners to continue to manage their land.

#### WYONG SHIRE AND WETLANDS

Many wetlands of local importance were not included in SEPP 14 designations. Such areas are especially important for the protection of Wyong's shallow lake system.

In 1989, Council completed a Wetlands Study which highlighted the importance of wetland systems. It led to the formulation of a three tiered approach to wetlands management consisting of:

- State Environmental Planning Policy No 14 - State Significant Wetlands.
- Local Zoning 7(g) Wetlands Management - Local Critical Wetlands.
- Development Control Plan for Wetlands - Areas of Major Nutrient and Sediment Filtering Importance and Wetland Buffers.



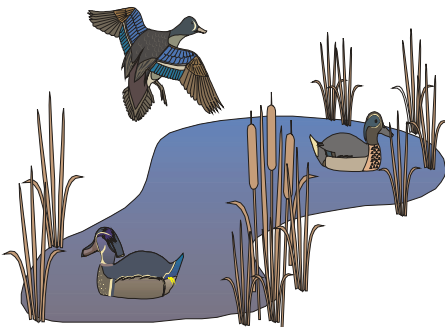
The 7(g) Wetlands Management zone provides the final layer of environmental control in the three tiered system of wetlands management in Wyong Shire. This plan identifies the most important wetlands by introducing a 7(g) Wetlands Management Zone. This includes many locally important wetlands were not included under SEPP 14 designation.

In addition, many locally significant wetlands occur in land use zonings which do not adequately emphasise their conservation value.

The boundaries of these wetlands have been identified on the basis of wetland plant species. This zoning permits a number of forms of land use in wetland habitat with Council consent. It also recognises some land practices which are frequently required in wetlands, such as drainage and flood mitigation works.

In submitting an application to develop in a 7(g) zone, a Wetland Effects Statement (WES) must be provided documenting the impact of the development on wetland ecosystems.

Other less significant wetland areas still serve an important role for sediment and nutrient filtering. This is provided for through a Development Control Plan - 'Wetlands', which was first created in November 1989. This Development Control Plan requires that a Statement of Environmental Effects accompany certain development applications. This includes and extends beyond most 7(g) Wetlands.



**DEVELOPMENT IN THE 7(g) WETLANDS MANAGEMENT ZONE**

The 7(g) Wetlands Management Zone has been formulated to allow the consideration of a range of land uses which are sometimes required to be carried out in wetland environments. Detailed zone objectives have also been formulated to guide development and land management decisions.

Development occurring within the 7(g) Wetlands Management Zone is required to be submitted with a WES. The matters which are required to be addressed in a WES have been specifically identified to target relevant wetland development concerns. Further information on these requirements can be provided by Council. Council can adjust the information required to be submitted for specific development proposals

and can waive the requirement for a WES for minor forms of development in some instances. Some examples of minor development which Council might seek to waive environmental information requirements include: garden sheds; survey clearing; house extensions.

**DEVELOPMENT IN WYONG'S WETLANDS DCP**

The Wetlands Development Control Plan covers an extensive area of low lying areas within Wyong Shire. The Wetlands Development Control Plan aims to protect lands of nutrient and sediment filtering significance.

It also functions as a buffer zone around 7(g) Wetlands by requiring environmental information to be submitted in areas adjoining 7(g) and SEPP 14 Wetlands and provides environmental controls for smaller remnant wetlands which are not covered by other wetland policies.

The Development Control Plan does not prohibit development, but requires certain information to be lodged in the form of a SEE with development applications to enable consideration of wetland impacts. A SEE lists environmental changes which can arise from a development, including its effects on surface and groundwater, native plants, wildlife and scenic values. The SEE must explore alternatives to the proposed development to determine if it can be carried out with less impact. The Wetlands Development Control Plan also has a provision to allow the waiving of the requirement to submit a SEE for minor development.

**DOES A 7(g) ZONE PREVENT ME FROM USING MY LAND?**

Every existing land use and development approved and current prior to the introduction of the 7(g) zone being created, may continue without change. Many forms of development are also permitted under the 7(g) zoning and may proceed as long as adverse impacts on wetlands can be controlled.

### **DOES THE DEVELOPMENT CONTROL PLAN RESTRICT WHAT I CAN DO WITH MY LAND?**

Permissible forms of land use are established by the zoning and the natural restrictions of the site. Zoning is not changed by the Development Control Plan. All existing legal forms of land use may continue without additional restrictions.

### **HOW CAN I HELP PROTECT WYONG'S WETLANDS?**

The survival of Wyong's wetlands depends on individuals. Dumping garden clippings, soil, building rubble, old oil or unused garden chemicals in drainage ways, sewers, or over the back fence contributes to the death of wetlands. There are better ways to dispose of such wastes with little effect. Council will provide advice and where possible, assist with tree plantings and revegetation of wetland areas. If you own wetland or have an interest in wetlands, contact Council for further information.

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Be environmentally aware. Individuals in the community are often the first to identify a major erosion problem, suspicious dying-back of plants, dead animals, oil slicks, etc. Reporting such damage to Council staff may save a wetland. If you witness illegal activities, notify Council quickly with as many details as possible.

Protecting Wyong's wetlands is everyone's responsibility. Help ensure that these areas continue to perform their vital tasks for many years to come and thus maintain our fine environment.

### **WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?**

If you want more information on wetland policy or are considering carrying out a development proposal in a wetland area, Council's

Development Services Division should be contacted.

Wyong Shire Council  
Development Services Division  
PO Box 20  
WYONG NSW 2259  
Phone: (02) 4350 5555

If an Environmental Impact Statement, Wetland Effects Statement or Statement of Environmental Effects is to be lodged, a copy of Council's requirements should be obtained from Council offices.

*PLEASE NOTE: This pamphlet provides general information on wetland land use controls within the Shire. It is not a legal document and does not contain the detail available in Instruments and the Development Control Plan*

