

Fingerboards Critical Minerals Project Study Briefs - Surface Water Assessment

Overview

The surface water assessment will map and define the relevant surface water bodies/features within, immediately surrounding and downstream of the Project site, and will include farm dams, ephemeral drainage lines (gullies), creeks, rivers and lakes.

Site investigations will be carried out to characterise existing surface water conditions, to allow an understanding on how the construction, operation and closure of the Project could impact on local waterbodies and watercourses.

The assessment will provide a comprehensive, evidence-based evaluation of the local surface water availability, quality, and flood risk, and practical mitigation strategies to safeguard regional water resources and agricultural interests now and in the context of any climate change scenarios.

Assessment Objectives

- Definition of surface water features relevant to the Project that provides a comprehensive outline of the existing conditions and seasonal/climatic variability.
- Assessment of potential surface water flow and quality changes that may occur from construction, operation and closure of the Project.
- Utilisation of groundwater assessment to identify surface water features that may interact with groundwater either seasonally or permanently.
- Identify, analyse and recommend mitigation measures that avoids or minimises changes to local/regional water resources, agricultural users, and connected ecosystems such as the Mitchell and Perry Rivers and the Gippsland Lakes Ramsar site.
- Support engagement with the local community to ensure that their concerns over surface water impacts are addressed in the assessment process and outcome reporting.
- Support informed decision-making by providing transparent data and practical mitigation strategies for local landholders and water users.

Preliminary Focus Areas

- **Surface Water Availability** - Analyse potential changes in water flow and quality resulting from mining operations and infrastructure, aiming to prevent negative impacts on downstream users and sensitive conservation areas.

- **Flood Risk and Water Quality** - Modelling to help anticipate nature and extent of flood events and potential changes in flow and inundation extents to assess risks to agricultural production and natural assets.
- **Climate and Catchment Scenarios**- Multiple climate scenarios will be considered to ensure that water management plans remain robust under future conditions, including flood, drought, and variable seasonal/climatic events.
- **Stakeholder Engagement**- Support community meetings and transparent reporting, allowing the local community to provide feedback and understand the findings, including planned mitigation measures.

Specialist Consultant

GCM has engaged Water Technology Pty Ltd as the lead consultancy for the assessment on the surface water environments. They are a nationally recognised specialist consultancy in hydrology, water engineering, and flood modelling, with extensive experience delivering water impact assessments in the region and Environment Effects Statements for major mining, energy, and infrastructure projects across Victoria and Australia. More information is available at <https://www.watertech.com.au>

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