



La Grange groundwater allocation plan: Evaluation statement 2011-2012

Evaluation statements are part of the Department of Water's adaptive management approach and allow us to continually review and improve management of water resources.

This is the second evaluation statement for the *La Grange groundwater allocation plan* and should be read in conjunction with the plan, which is available from our website <www.water.wa.gov.au>.

This statement evaluates the extent to which the objectives of the plan were met between July 2011 and November 2012. It presents an assessment of the resource condition and identifies how we have managed the groundwater resource to ensure the plan's objectives continue to be met.

The objectives of the plan are:

- 1 Maintain the saltwater/ freshwater interface to avoid impacts on existing near-coastal water users, water-dependent values and community water supplies.
- 2 Manage groundwater allocation to avoid impacts on Mandora Marsh and the flow at Mandora Springs.
- 3 Minimise the impact of water abstraction on all water-dependent values.
- 4 Manage new licence applications to avoid impacts on reliability of water supply for other users.
- 5 Conduct the licence assessment process in recognition of native title holder's rights.

1 Allocation status

1.1 Changes in allocation status

The volume of water licensed and committed in the Canning-Broome (Broome Sandstone) aquifer in the La Grange South subarea did not change. The volume of water licensed and committed in the La Grange North subarea increased slightly (Table 1). The volume of water currently licensed and committed has increased since the plan was released in January 2010, but there is still approximately 70% of the allocation limit available for licensing in both subareas.

For a full list of up-to-date water availability in all resources contact the Kimberley Regional office in Kununurra on (08) 9166 4100 or see our water register, <www.water.wa.gov.au/ags/WaterRegister>.

Table 1 Allocation status for the La Grange subareas 2009-2012

Resource		Total allocation limit	Licensed entitlements (GL/yr)				% committed and allocated (2012) ¹
			November 2009	July 2010	July 2011	November 2012	
La Grange North	Canning-Broome aquifer	35.0	2.6	2.6	9.8	9.9	30
La Grange South	Canning-Broome aquifer	15.0	1.1	1.1	4.6	4.6	34

¹ This includes the entitlements for a conditional approval and/or development conditions on a licence

2 Resource status

The monitoring data collected by licensees during 2011 indicate that water use is significantly less than licensed annual water entitlements, and that there were no adverse impacts on regional groundwater levels or water quality. At this stage, licensee reporting is the only mechanism for monitoring changes in water quality and levels in the plan area. As stated in the plan, once the system reaches 50% of the allocation limit, we will evaluate the need for regional groundwater monitoring.

3 Plan performance

3.1 Management triggers

The management triggers were not reached during this evaluation period.

The current level of water use is less than 50% of the allocation limit. We did not receive any information indicating that there were impacts to water quality, cultural sites, community water supplies or groundwater-dependent ecosystems.

The largest groundwater licence request received in the evaluation period was for less than 10% of the available water and was assessed and issued in accordance with the plan.

3.2 Evaluation against the plan objectives

We are continuing to meet the five objectives of the plan (Table 2) and address relevant allocation issues.

Table 2 Objectives of the La Grange plan

Objective	Status
1 Maintain the saltwater/freshwater interface to avoid impacts on existing near-coastal water-users, water-dependent values and community water supplies.	Met
2 Manage groundwater allocation to avoid impacts on Mandora Marsh and the flow at Mandora springs.	Met
3 Minimise the impact of water abstraction on all water-dependent values.	Met
4 Manage new licence applications to avoid impacts on reliability of water supply for other users.	Met
5 Conduct the licence assessment process in recognition of native title holder's rights.	Met

The plans' objectives are being met through:

- processing of licence applications in accordance with the *Rights in Water and Irrigation Act 1914* and statewide and local licensing policies set out in the plan
- applying the management rules for the Coastal and Mandora Marsh management zones
- continuing to notify native title interests in accordance with the *Native Title Act 1993* and considering possible cross-boundary impacts in the decision to undertake notification
- undertaking an annual evaluation of the plan, including a review of licensee monitoring data.

In addition, we have continued to facilitate projects and cross-agency interactions to develop a better understanding of groundwater resources in La Grange to inform the future review or replacement of the plan. During the evaluation period this has been achieved through:

- Department of Water's involvement in the statewide Water and Natural Resource Management initiative, funded by Royalties for Regions. The Department of Agriculture and Food Western Australia's (DAFWA) La Grange land and water planning project is part of this initiative. The project involves a pre-feasibility study investigating the suitability of the La Grange area for future horticultural development. The first stage of the project (which is funded to 2016) will not directly increase water use
- the delivery of the Waterways Education Program with the Karajarri Rangers in October 2012 carried out in partnership with the University of Western Australia and DAFWA. The project involved training the rangers in surface and groundwater monitoring techniques and building their capacity to engage in DAFWA's land and water planning project.

4 Response to this evaluation

Through this evaluation, we have identified that the department's current management approach is meeting the objectives of the plan and the plan is suitable to remain in place until the next evaluation.

The suitability of the plan to manage the groundwater resources in the La Grange area will continue to be considered each year through the evaluation process and in line with the management triggers.

The department will continue to undertake an annual evaluation of the La Grange plan however an evaluation statement will not necessarily be published every year. The next statement will be released in three years, or sooner if there are any significant changes to water use, or water quality, that trigger a management response.

Information on how the department is managing groundwater resources is available by contacting the Kununurra office on (08) 9166 4100.