



Media Statement

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Gibson's drinking water protected by a new plan

The Gibson drinking water source protection plan has been released to ensure the continued availability of safe, good quality drinking water for the Great Southern regional town.

The Department of Water's Director of Water Resource Management, John Ruprecht, said a review of the appropriateness of the existing water reserve was a key part of developing the plan for Gibson - a small town and agricultural service centre 24 kilometres north of Esperance.

"The area of land actually required to protect the water source was reconsidered, and land to the east and some to the north and south of the existing reserve has been excluded," Mr Ruprecht said.

"As a result, the new water reserve is half the size of the existing one."

Mr Ruprecht said the *Gibson Water Reserve Drinking Water Source Protection Plan* was part of the Department of Water's strategy that aimed to protect drinking water sources throughout Western Australia.

He said the plan's development evolved after community consultations similar to those conducted in other areas, because water protection was an important issue.

"We wanted to be sure everyone had an opportunity to be involved in the decision-making process," Mr Ruprecht said.

"It's vital that the community understands how this water reserve works, how it should be managed and how people can help protect it from existing and future contamination risks.

"The plan, prepared in consultation with landowners, the Shire of Esperance and the Water Corporation, outlines the location of the drinking water reserve, existing and future usage of the water source and potential sources of contamination.

"Gibson's drinking water supply comes from a Water Corporation wellfield that draws groundwater from a relatively shallow and unconfined aquifer. The existing Gibson Water Reserve was proclaimed in 1990 under the *Country Areas Water Supply Act 1947* for the purpose of protecting the public drinking water source from potential contamination."



Mr Ruprecht said that most of the water reserve is rural (pastoral and grazing) land and this land use activity is compatible with the proposed management of the water reserve.

However, the plan did identify potential drinking water quality contamination risks from some land use activities. He said the fuel storage facilities at the Gibson Soak Hotel and Store were a potential risk and required careful ongoing management. Current practices to manage this risk included use of a comprehensive method to account for all fuel supplied and stored.

Additionally, a Water Corporation monitoring bore was located between the production bores and fuel facilities.

The plan also recommends:

- strategies to manage potential risks while recognising the rights of landowners to continue approved established land use
- improvements to protection in the reserve to ensure good quality water supply in the long term
- wellhead protection zones be proclaimed around the production bores
- priority classifications to ensure an appropriate level of protection of the water source.

Copies can be obtained from the Department of Water on (08) 6364 7600 or by visiting our website www.water.wa.gov.au / Water management / publications / plans and assessments.

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