



DECEMBER 2014

End of year SOMR update

As the second year of SOMR activities is coming to an end, it is time to update some relevant issues.

It might appear that the Macleay River is currently not threatened by contamination from mining and therefore SOMR has become less relevant. However, as shown in the attached reports, there are immediate issues with mining explorations in the catchment and with historical mine sites. SOMR's role to monitor the activities in the valley has not ended – and we haven't even begun discussing the impact of a dam in the catchment as is being suggested by the Nationals Member for New England and Federal Minister for Agriculture Barnaby Joyce.

The Committee

After the first public meeting in January 2013, a committee formed and meets at least once a month. When SOMR was incorporated in July 2013, some members took on the necessary roles of office bearers, but the larger group always worked collaboratively. On 8 November 2014, at the first AGM, the office bearers were confirmed in a formal election and two additional roles were established.

They are:

Chairman Arthur Bain Bellbrook
Vice Chairman .. Rupert Milne Home Mungay Creek
Treasurer Stephen Holden Lower Creek
Secretary Christa Schwoebel Kempsey
Assistant Secretary Nona Harvey Kempsey
Public Officer John Cruickshanks Kempsey

Other key contributors are Liz Ekman, Paul Ekman, Denise Payne, Colin Payne and Gavin Bamforth who help with tasks such as research, organising activities and publicity.

Get involved!

There is always the need for the involvement of more people, especially since some who were active during the first year have had to succumb to the demands of work, family or other issues. The meetings and the issues we take on are never boring and are vital to the survival of our river!

In particular, we are looking for somebody to assist with the administration of the SOMR website and setting up Mail Chimp for mail outs. If you can help, please get in touch by responding to this email.

OUR NEWS IN BRIEF

Hillgrove Mine

In April, Bracken Resources began gold and antimony extraction at Hillgrove. Their community liaison officers kept SOMR informed and gave committee members the opportunity for an extensive tour of the site. The impression is that much improved safety features have been implemented and contamination of the catchment can be prevented – except in very extreme weather conditions. SOMR is continuing a monitoring role and will keep the community informed about planned expansion of the mine.

Explorations at Halls Peak

SOMR has been closely monitoring the exploration companies in the Halls Peak area. Not only their work on the ground has given cause for concern, but more so their disregard for community consultation. The fact that several companies are involved, including one government owned Chinese company also raises questions about who can be held responsible. Share packets, directors and exploration licences have been shifted and shuffled throughout the year. (For more details see the report on the website which is also attached to this mail-out.)

Explorations at Yessebah

A new exploration issue in the catchment has arisen in the Yessebah area. Thomson Resources who holds an exploration licence, is searching for deposits of intrusion related gold and, like PMR/SOC, has received a government grant for drilling. SOMR is currently trying to identify the exact location. It was noted that the Chairman of Thomson Resources has been working in an influential position in the NSW government and in fact set up the funding program his company now seems to benefit from.

Water Testing, Kempsey Shire Council

Shortly after the very first community meeting, Kempsey Shire Council initiated a raw water testing program at Bellbrook and successfully applied for government funding for a year of monthly testing. Unfortunately, there were delays for the tests to begin. We understand that only three tests were carried out in late 2013 and early 2014. Eventually, in March those results were published on Council's website, but then the program stalled. In response to recent SOMR inquiries, KSC apologised for the fact that the tests have not been continued as a result of staff changes and "a failure to complete a full handover". Another testing series for a full 12 month period is planned for 2015.

Postcards for Sale

Peter and Rhonda Minko of Bellbrook contributed three beautiful photographs of the Macleay River for our postcard. Aunty Esther Quinlin gave permission to use the Dhunghutti words Banduungakayi Mulumunga, meaning from the mountains to the coast as caption on the cards. John Cruickshank designed the 18x11 cm postcards which are now selling to improve our funds.

If you would like to buy some postcards, please get in touch by responding to this email.



\$1.50 for 1 card, \$4. for 3 cards

Plans for 2015

We have asked Hillgrove Mine to arrange another guided tour of the site for SOMR members early in 2015. We will keep you informed.

SOMR is planning to hold next year's Paddle on the Macleay in the Lower Macleay in the Yarrahpinni – Fishermans Reach area.

The Bush Dance held in tandem with the AGM at Oddfellows was a lot of fun and there have been calls to repeat this community event. While it wasn't a huge success as a fundraiser and isn't exactly part of SOMR's core business, we feel encouraged to do it again sometime, maybe in a larger venue.