



SF Irrigation Co-operative Ltd
28527 South West Highway
Manjimup WA 6258
E info@sfic.com.au
ABN 24 904 433 713

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Hon Matthew Swinbourn MLC
Chairman
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Parliament House
4 Harvest Tce
WEST PERTH WA 6005

Southern Forests Irrigation Scheme (SFIS)

- The SFIS will showcase an innovative, sustainable way forward for water management in W.A;
- The SFIS will create over 300 jobs in the South West;
- The SFIS will create an iconic tourism location for the Southern Forests region;
- The SFIS will provide opportunity for South West business and for local indigenous peoples.

Dear Chair

On behalf of all members of the SF Irrigation Co-operative Limited (SFIC) I would like to thank the State Government for showing strong leadership in progressing the SFIS. The SFIC is very confident, that once operational, the benefits of the Scheme will be clearer not only to the towns of Manjimup and Pemberton but also to the whole State.

The Southern Forests region is the largest economic contributor of the irrigated agriculture regions in the state and therefore ensuring that a reliable, good quality water source is sustained in the face of declining rainfall is important for all West Australians.

The SFIC recognises that like all new projects and changes to the status quo not everyone is supportive of the scheme at present. So the SFIC welcomes the Standing Committee assessing the merits of the scheme as this will provide all interested parties with an independent assessment of all aspects of the project.

On behalf of the 75 local farming businesses that are members of the SFIC and the hundreds of local people these businesses employ the SFIC has compiled the following facts of the SFIS:

Origins and Need for a new way to manage water

- The initiation of the SFIS concept was a consequence of several factors such as the exceptionally low 2010 winter rainfall, the continuation of sub-catchments reaching full allocation of water licences, and global rainfall models illustrating that the southwest of W.A will be one of the worst affected areas in the world as climate change continues to impact;

- A three year study was undertaken via the Water for Food initiative to develop a new way to provide reliable water for those catchments where A class licenses are fully allocated and to provide an opportunity for farmers in the Manjimup-Pemberton agricultural region to access this water. A number of options were assessed and the best option was the present SFIS;
- The design of the SFIS is such that it will create a new and sustainable way water is managed in the local agricultural industry. The development of a central reservoir and associated pump station technology which will be state-of-the-art and will enable the SFIC as operator the ability to monitor and control the volume of water abstracted and thence delivered to each individual farm. This will enable a level of regulation not currently possible and ensure a truly sustainable use of this precious resource;
- This scheme is an innovative way of preparing for the continued reduction in rainfall and run-off due to the impacts of climate change.

Membership and Employment

- The SFIC currently has 75 agricultural businesses as members covering 92 different farms in the district which it is estimated directly support over 400 employees. The main produce of these businesses are avocados, truffles, cattle, apples, grapes, walnuts, cauliflowers, broccoli, lettuce and potatoes;
- Applications for membership and to purchase water was open to all businesses in the district, through a Letter of Intent process run by the government;
- The SFIS is forecast to not only sustain current production but also potentially open a further 1,675 ha of agricultural land to more intense farming;
- It is forecast that 125 jobs will be required for the approximately two year construction period and a further 225 direct and indirect full-time jobs once the scheme is operational. These figures do not include the potential upside for employment to associated industries in the southwest;
- In addition, the Department of Primary Industry and Regional Development (DPIRD) as partners with the SFIC in the project is working with the two indigenous groups whose country the project will be developed within to ensure these people share the benefits of the project.

Project Details (see attached Scheme Overview Map)

- Offtake pump set (approx. 13 m x 8 m) within riverbank connected to pump station approximately 100 m uphill away from river;
- Supply pipeline to follow existing forestry roads approximately 3.2 km east of river to the reservoir site;
- Gully wall to be constructed across Record Brook to provide an inundation area of approximately 160 ha. Note Record Brook is an ephemeral stream (flows only in winter) and recent studies have shown it does not support aquatic fauna populations due to its temporary flows;
- Distribution pump station to lift water to balance tanks at high points in landscape on two separate pipe networks. From this point the water is gravity-fed to the farms in the district;
- Power to be supplied to the pump stations via underground cable;
- In addition, a solar array to potentially be added to reduce external power requirement;
- Approximately 236 km of pipe to be laid 700 mm below ground level along road reserves and paddock firebreaks to supply reliable, good quality water to farms in the district;
- The pipe network allows for water to be traded between neighbours (if they are land owners and they must become members of the SFIC) either by Temporary Transfer or Permanent Transfer; that is, if Farm A does not need all their entitlement one year this can be sold to Farm B that may need it more that year, ensuring this precious resource is put to the best use every year, rather than lost by evaporation and leakage. It is not possible for third party corporates to buy and sell water, this scheme is for the supply of water to grow food for the state, not for speculation. The SFIC rules prevent water speculation.

Water

- The proposed abstraction of water from the river has been assessed by independent experts in the field and the Department of Water and Environment Regulation (DWER) including any potential impacts on aquatic flora and fauna at the offtake point and downstream to the estuary. The assessment of the potential impacts of this abstraction on the river and other water licence holders was conducted before the allocation amount was determined to ensure it would not harm or cause harm to the river, the environs and flora and fauna;
- The proposed allocation of water is additional to all current water licences (therefore it is “new water”) and this allocation set aside by DWER who are on the public record stating that it does not impact on current licence holders;
- The scheme can only abstract water when there is sufficient Donnelly River flow ensuring the river comes first. The licence conditions set by DWER ensure that the SFIC will not pump the same amount every year but only once there is sufficient flow in the river to protect the river environment.

Environmental

- The SFIC and DPIRD have commissioned an extensive range of scientific surveys to provide the baseline data to assess the potential impact of the project (see attached);
- The project will be assessed by the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) as a Public Environmental Review with a 6 week public comment period. All information about the project, the studies conducted and assessment of impact will be available to the public for review and comment
- No Old Growth forest will be impacted;
- The new reservoir will actually create a new environment for fauna in the area.

Economic

- The SFIS will benefit the entire South West region with project funds already being spent employing South West local businesses, consultants, accountants, surveyors, IT and legal professionals to progress feasibility. It is estimated that over \$1 million will be spent in the South West during the feasibility phase of the project and with an estimated total capital cost of \$80 million, the potential opportunities for South West businesses is huge;
- Tenders for the major Design and Construction packages will ensure local content is required for success and we know that the greater South West region has strong candidates capable of completing this work. The SFIC will work with the South West Development Commission to ensure that contractors based in the South West are fully informed of these opportunities;
- Members of the SFIC are forecast to spend ~\$54M on farm equipment and infrastructure to prepare their businesses for the uptake of their water entitlements. This money will be spent in the local economy.

Social

- Increased expenditure in Manjimup and Pemberton associated with the project and new employment has direct flow on effects not just to other businesses in towns but to the whole community with families coming to town potentially increasing school numbers and adding value to the community;
- The creation of a large body of water in the State Forest represents a potential opportunity to attract tourists to the region. The SFIC is working with DPIRD, DBCA and the Shire to assess what activities may be suitable for the site such as marroning, fresh water fishing and potentially camping;

- There are possibilities to extend loops off the Bibbulmun Track and Munda Biddi Trails around the reservoir bringing more people through the Southern Forests region and providing a tranquil location for these visitors and locals alike;
- The SFIC is designing the scheme to also include firefighting supply points along the widespread network to assist to safeguard the community in the event of bushfires.

The SFIS can clearly show the project will:

- Create hundreds of jobs for the South West;
- Create significant business opportunities for contractors based in the South West;
- Show it is ahead of the curve with its climate change adaptation for our South West agricultural areas, so we don't see situations akin to the East Coast;
- Provide drought security to one of the state's most important food bowls;
- Provide food security to the state;
- Show the industry a new innovative approach to region scale sustainable water management.

Yours sincerely



Harvey Giblett
Chair
SF Irrigation Co-operative Ltd



Jeremy Bower
Chief Executive Officer
SF Irrigation Co-operative Ltd

Attachment A: Scheme Overview Map



Proposed Southern Forests Irrigation Scheme

Legend

-  Grower North pipeline
-  Grower South pipeline
-  Transfer pipeline
-  Distribution Pump Station (DPS)
-  Supply Pump Station
-  Balance Tank
-  Record Brook Dam Rev1
-  Donnelly River



REFERENCE:
 Projection: Universal Transverse Mercator
 Datum: Geocentric Datum of Australia 1984
 Vertical Datum: Australian Height Datum 1971
 Date: August 2019
 Job Number: 2017299

SOURCE DATA: Aerial photo, roads and LGA boundary provided by Landgate
 Waterways provided by DWER

DISCLAIMER
 While all reasonable care has been taken in the preparation of the material in this document, the Western Australian Government and its officers accept no responsibility for any errors or omissions that may appear hereafter, or for any loss, however caused, sustained by any person who relies on it.

Attachment B: List of Scientific Environmental Survey undertaken

- Land Assessment Pty Ltd (2016). Proposed Southern Forests Irrigation Scheme Land Capability and Water Demand Assessment. Report prepared for Department of Water, Western Australia.
- Strategen (2016). Southern Forests Water Futures Project Approvals Framework.
- Bamford, M and Chuk, K. (2016). Manjimup Irrigation Project - Fauna Assessment. Report prepared for Department of Water, 168 St Georges Terrace, Perth WA, 6000.
- Beatty, S, Morgan, D., Ryan, T. and K. Strehlow. (2016). Review of Aquatic fauna in the Warren Donnelly Catchments: Identification of Knowledge Gaps and a Preliminary Assessment of Ecological Risks from Increased Water Abstraction. Report to the Department of Water. Freshwater Fish Group and Fish Health Unit, Murdoch University, Perth, Western Australia.
- Storer T, Rennie B, O'Neill K, White G, Christie E (2017a), Record Brook river health monitoring program, unpublished report by Water Science Branch to the Water for Food Program, Department of Water, Perth.
- Storer T, Rennie B, O'Neill K, White G, Christie E, Bunny F (2017b), Record Brook condition summary 2016-17, unpublished report by Water Science Branch to the Water for Food Southern Forests Program, Department of Water, Perth.
- Strategen Environmental. (2018). Pipeline network alignment - Southern Forests Irrigation Scheme - Flora, vegetation and fauna survey
- Strategen Environmental. (2019). Pipeline network alignment - Southern Forests Irrigation Scheme - Detailed flora and vegetation survey.
- Strategen Environmental (2019) Southern Forests Water Futures Project - Detailed flora and vegetation survey.
- 360 Environmental (2019). Detailed / Level 2 Terrestrial Vertebrate Fauna Survey. Prepared for Southern Forest Irrigation Co-operative Limited.
- Invertebrate Solutions (2019). Survey for Short Range Endemic Fauna for the Southern Forests Irrigation Scheme, Manjimup and Pemberton, Western Australia. Prepared for Southern Forests Irrigation Cooperative Pty Ltd.
- Stream Environment and Water (2019) Visual Impact Assessment.
- Stream Environment and Water (2019) Carnaby's, Baudin's and Forest Red-tailed Black Cockatoos Targeted Assessment.
- Shane Priddle (SW Environmental), Greg Harewood, Jane Wilshaw (Stream Environment and Water), Roy Teale (2019) Western Ringtail Possum and Quokka Targeted Assessment.
- Shane Priddle (SW Environmental), Greg Harewood, Jane Wilshaw (Stream Environment and Water) (2019). Additional Quokka Surveys.
- Focused Vision Consulting (2019). Flora and Vegetation Assessment, Report prepared for Stream Environment and Water.
- Stream Environment and Water (2019). Water Quality Monitoring.