



**Government  
of South Australia**

Department for  
Energy and Mining

# Dry Creek Saltfields

## St Kilda Community Update

**September 2021**

Dear St Kilda Resident,

The Government of South Australia, through the Department for Energy and Mining, (DEM), the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) and the Department for Environment and Water (DEW), take seriously the community concerns about the Dry Creek Saltfields. Water levels are carefully monitored to ensure the company responsible for the saltfields are managing operations according to its obligations.

This community update provides you with more information on the measures DEM is taking with regard to saltfield water levels and groundwater and planted tree health in the St Kilda township, and complements the meetings held with the St Kilda Mangrove Alliance, City of Salisbury and local residents during 2021.

Community members have also shared their environmental concerns based on their many years of experience and local knowledge, which is greatly appreciated.

### **Pond water levels in the Dry Creek saltfields**

Public comments have recently suggested that there is a risk of damage to mangroves and saltmarsh south of the St Kilda marina due to

Adelaide's winter rainfall increasing seepage of hypersaline groundwater. The community can be assured that while water levels in the ponds adjacent to St Kilda have increased, active monitoring indicates that this occurrence has not put at risk the nearby vegetation. It is not proposed to direct the saltfields operator to pump out water from these ponds at this time.

The government has been monitoring this area since late 2020 and continues to monitor surface water and ground water habitats across the saltmarsh. Government monitoring has shown no evidence of any new impacts from movement of hypersaline groundwater into the saltmarsh following the partial filling of the ponds from the 2021 winter rains. The government will continue to monitor and review the groundwater movement, pond stability and saltmarsh areas, to inform any necessary actions required in the management and oversight of the saltfields.

Notwithstanding the current advice, the government will continue to work with the saltfields operator to assess the water balance across the entire Dry Creek saltfields. This will inform future actions, as required, to reduce the potential for any additional vegetation impacts outside the boundaries of the current mining leases. Government will use monitoring to inform decision making in real time and respond quickly if required.



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## Discharge to the Bolivar Outfall Channel

Since 29 May 2021, the saltfields operator has been pumping brine from the northern sections of the Dry Creek saltfields into the SA Water Bolivar outfall channel at St Kilda. Brine is diluted with treated wastewater from the Bolivar treatment plant as it flows through the outfall channel, before being safely discharged into Gulf St Vincent. This interim measure aims to establish environmental stability for the pond ecosystems until the long-term future of the area is determined. The pumping is being overseen by DEM and the EPA, which includes access to live monitoring data.

The saltfields operator must ensure that water salinity in the outfall channel does not exceed 45 parts per thousand. This is the value set by the EPA to protect the marine environment. The saltfield operator is currently meeting these values.

To date, over 1.7 billion litres of brine has been safely discharged from the ponds to the North of St Kilda through the Bolivar outfall, reducing salinity from 300 parts per thousand to 187 parts per thousand. It is expected that salinity will continue to decrease towards historical levels of 125 to 175 parts per thousand in coming months.

## Groundwater and planted tree health in St Kilda township

The government acknowledges community concerns regarding potential movement of saline groundwater from the saltfields towards the St Kilda community. With input from the

the City of Salisbury, government has commissioned a technical review and groundwater monitoring program to assess and inform possible causes and impacts of any potential vegetation damage within the St Kilda township.

In coming weeks, government staff and contractors will be in public areas of the township undertaking this work. They will not enter private property unless invited to do so. The findings of this review and monitoring will be made publicly available in the future.

## More information

The Dry Creek saltfields are an area of evaporation ponds stretching more than 30 km along the coast from Dry Creek to Middle Beach. They are part of a multiple use, complex environment, and the government continues to focus on the monitoring, assessment and stability of this unique site and the surrounding environment.

DEM is working closely with the EPA and DEW to understand and respond to all elements of this complex issue. To remain updated on the Dry Creek saltfields and the work of the cross-agency project team, please visit the DEM website:

[https://energymining.sa.gov.au/dry\\_creek\\_salt\\_field](https://energymining.sa.gov.au/dry_creek_salt_field)

You can also register for email updates by emailing: [DEM.MiningRegRehab@sa.gov.au](mailto:DEM.MiningRegRehab@sa.gov.au), including the words 'Dry Creek Saltfields' in the subject line.