

Friends of Minnamurra River Incorporated

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For Immediate Publication

NEWS RELEASE

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NSW ENVIRONMENT PROTECT AUTHORITY ORDERS BORAL TO CLEAN UP SAND POLLUTION IN DUNMORE NATURE RESERVE

The NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) has responded to the recent Friends of Minnamurra River (FOMR Inc) report of sand and mining debris pollution in the Ruth Devenney Nature Reserve's Rocklow Creek at Dunmore by formally directing Boral Limited to clean it up.

The EPA's clean-up Notice¹ issued to a fully owned subsidiary of Boral on 27 July 2022, shortly after FOMR reported the pollution just downstream of Boral's Dunmore sand mining operation, gives the company a strict time schedule to do the clean-up work.

By 5pm on 10 August, Boral must have completely removed the sand pollution "in such a way and using such methods that exposes the underlying vegetation whilst minimising any impact and/or damage to the underlying vegetation."

The EPA reports that Boral employees told it that the polluting sand was not from its mining operations but from natural creek-bed erosion but the EPA Notice says Boral is "reasonably suspected by the EPA of causing or having caused a pollution incident" (ie. in Rocklow Creek water and along its banks).

The EPA also requires Boral to provide an expert report by 17 August on future pollution preventative measures as well as an assessment on what actions may be necessary to minimize any continuing risks to the underlying vegetation and surrounding environment from the pollution event.

Failure to comply with the EPA's Notice carries a maximum penalty for a corporation of \$1 million and a further \$120,000 for each day such non-compliance continues.

Professional botanical advice available to FOMR says that the countless tonnes of sand which were washed down Rocklow Creek, a tributary of the Minnamurra River, and which line a large area of its banks up to 30cm deep, says 'it is not ideal for any tree to have an unnatural build-up of soil or sand over their root systems' in the polluted area along both sides of Rocklow Creek. The creek forms the boundary between the Kiama and Shellharbour local government areas.

¹ (Notice no. 3503276.) <https://apps.epa.nsw.gov.au/prpoeoapp/ViewPOEONotice.aspx?DOCID=-1&SYSUID=1&LICID=3503276>

Contact: Will Chyra, Chair, FOMR Inc., 0419 633 191 (See also photos following next page.)

(Photo captions page 5)







PHOTO CAPTIONS:

Page 2, top: Just a few of the tongues of deposited sand, some of them up to 30cm thick, licking through wetlands on both banks of Dunmore's Rocklow Creek in the Ruth Devenney Nature Reserve, downstream of Boral Limited's sand mining operations at Dunmore. FOMR, 17 July 2022.

Page 2, bottom: Some of many pieces of debris spread through the Ruth Devenney Nature Reserve wetlands near Rocklow Creek, Dunmore. This one, dumped by the flooded creek waters beside the nature reserve walking track, is a buoy very similar to the type used to support pipes in sand mining dredge pits. FOMR, 17 July 2022.

Page 3, top: A Royal spoonbill stands on its new beach, a newly deposited plug of polluting sand, looking for food on the edge of Rocklow Creek, Dunmore. The culvert taking Rocklow Creek under the Princes Highway from the upstream Boral sand mining area can be seen at the top left of the photograph. FOMR, 17 July 2022

Page 3, bottom: More industrial debris; what appear to be strips of heavy rubber conveyor belt, part of numerous items of debris apparently spread by Rocklow Creek floodwaters along the creek banks and in surrounding Ruth Devenney Nature Reserve wetlands, immediately downstream of the Princes Highway. FOMR, 17 July 2022