

## **MEDIA RELEASE - 24.1.08**

### **MINING THREAT TO SYDNEY'S WATER SUPPLY**

ATTENTION : CHIEF OF STAFF, NEWS DESK, ENVIRONMENT WRITER

“Rivers SOS condemns BHP-Billiton's proposal to expand its Dendrobium coal mine in Sydney's southern water supply catchment area,” says the group's secretary, Julie Sheppard. “This contentious mine, which received conditional approval in 2001, undermines the Avon and Cordeaux dam catchments to the west of Wollongong.

Since mining operations began in 2005, unacceptable damage has occurred which includes rockfalls and the opening up of huge, deep fissures in the ground. These fissures are not ‘remediated’ as suggested in company reports but left as gaping holes throughout the bushland - a massive pitfall trap for hapless animals and a sink for runoff which should be going into the storage dams for our water supply.

What is worse in the new area proposed is the undermining of numerous upland swamps. These swamps are the lifeblood of the river systems, holding water like a sponge and releasing it slowly, even in dry periods, to maintain river flows. Undermining these swamps is likely to crack the bedrock below, drain and desiccate them and render them vulnerable to fire. This has happened with previous examples of undermining upland swamps in this area.

We keenly await the findings of the Inquiry into the Southern Coalfield, which was held in September last year, where the dangers of undermining swamps were outlined. When questioned, BHP-Billiton admitted that they were unaware of any successful remediation of swamps damaged by undermining. So mining proposals which in any way threaten swamps, the lynchpin of the whole hydrological system of our drinking water catchment area, have to be regarded as the ultimate folly in the pursuit of short-term financial gain at the expense of our precious water resources,” Ms Sheppard stated.

“The very different future that is looming for us all with the acceleration of climate change and the increase in population will probably not rely on coal but will be utterly dependent on us having secure water supplies. Risky mining ventures approved now could have catastrophic and irreparable impacts forever.

The people of Sydney rightly expect the State Government to protect our catchments for water supply. This mining proposal is not consistent with those expectations and must not be approved”, said Ms Sheppard.

**For more information contact: Julie Sheppard on 46 366301 or 0418278753.**

# RIVERS SOS

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*Rivers SOS is a coalition of environment/community groups; formed as a result of the wrecking of rivers in NSW by mining operations. We campaign for a safety zone of at least 1k round all rivers to protect them from ongoing damage. Groups supporting this campaign are:*

- *The Wilderness Society*
- *Nature Conservation Council of NSW*
- *Total Environment Centre*
- *Colong Foundation for Wilderness*
- *Blue Mountains Conservation Society*
- *Mineral Policy Institute*
- *Minewatch NSW*
- *Sutherland Shire Environment Centre*
- *Macarthur & Illawarra National Parks Association*
- *Gloucester Environment Group*
- *Nepean Action Group*
- *Georges River Environmental Action Team*
- *Hunter Environment Lobby*
- *Greens NSW*
- *Waterkeepers Australia*
- *Central West Environment Council*
- *OnlyOne Planet Australia*
- *Mudgee District Environment Group*
- *Mountain Dragon Bushwalkers*
- *Lithgow Environment Group*
- *Pages River and Tributaries Water Users' Association*
- *Clarence Residents' Association*
- *Johnsons Creek Conservation Committee*
- *EMBED MS ClipArt Gallery.5*
- *Save Barrington Tops Committee*
- *NSW Canoeists Inc.*
- *River Canoe Club*
- *Caroona Coal Action Group*
- *Australian Coal Alliance*
- *Upper Hunter Waterkeepers Alliance*
- *Wollondilly Bass Club*
- *Robertson Environment Protection Society*
- *Save Water Alliance*
- *Inland Rivers Network*
- *Australian Democrats*
- *Water First*