



# Exmouth groundwater allocation limits review

Project update November 2024

## What is the Exmouth groundwater allocation limits review project?

The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (department) is reviewing groundwater allocation limits across the Exmouth Peninsula. Work began on this project in November 2022.

This allocation limits review is for the Cape Range Limestone aquifer of the North West Cape, including both fresh and saline groundwater resources. It is not a review of individual water licences.

More information about the current allocation limits, the review, and water planning is available on our website:

[Exmouth groundwater allocation planning](#)



## Why is this important?

Protecting environmental values that depend on groundwater is important to the State Government, the Exmouth community, Traditional Owners, water users, and community interest groups active in Exmouth.

The outcomes of the groundwater allocation limits review will support the department's advice to the Minister for Environment's [Exmouth Gulf Taskforce](#). The Taskforce was established in July 2022 as the State Government's key coordinating body for strategic advice on protection and integrated management options for Exmouth Gulf in partnership with the Traditional Owners. Key focus areas for the Taskforce include protecting the Gulf's subterranean waterways and addressing knowledge gaps.

Our review will help the Taskforce consider enhanced protection options for the Cape Range Subterranean Waterways and other groundwater-dependent ecological, cultural, heritage and social values. Our review is also informing Water Corporation's [future water source planning](#) for Exmouth town's drinking water supply.

## What have we done so far?

The department manages the take of groundwater, and the health of the resource, through water licensing and monitoring processes.

During 2023 and early 2024, we reviewed our hydrogeological understanding of the North West Cape and used future climate projections to assess how groundwater resources may be affected by climate change.

In May 2023, we jointly commissioned an Airborne Electromagnetic (AEM) survey with Water Corporation. The AEM survey provided new information on geophysical mapping that is helping guide the science and our method for making allocation limit decisions. The survey has also confirmed the nature and inland extent of the naturally occurring seawater interface. More information about the AEM is published on [Water Corporation's website](#) (search 'AEM 2023').

We have also reviewed known environmental, heritage and social values across the peninsula that may be groundwater dependent and considered these in our review.

## Who have we talked to about this work?

We are collaborating with the Exmouth Gulf Taskforce and have consulted with the Traditional Owners. This has helped to identify potential opportunities for enhanced protections for the Cape Range Subterranean Waterways along with key groundwater-dependent ecosystems and cultural water values that require protection.

We have also consulted with Water Corporation on the allocation limits review and discussed demand for town water supply.

We will be engaging further with stakeholders over coming months to discuss the outcomes of our review.

## What are the next steps?

We are now preparing two reports:

- an Exmouth groundwater allocation limits review report to outline the method and information we have used to review and decide on allocation limits
- a report on the importance of water to environmental, heritage and social values of the Exmouth Peninsula.

We are working with Water Corporation as it develops options to meet immediate and future demand for drinking water supply for the town of Exmouth. The focus is on options that are sustainable and consider the future climate.

We will continue to consult with Traditional Owners to better incorporate cultural water knowledge and values into our decision-making.

## More information and resources

Information about our [water licensing process](#) and [water allocation planning process](#) is available on our website.

You can learn more about water use in Exmouth and current water licences through our online [Water Register](#) tool. The online application for the register is quick and easy, with checkboxes to select the type of information you are seeking. Be aware that some information retrieval does incur a fee – this is detailed on the Water Register webpage.

If the information you need is not available through the Water Register tool, you can inquire through our water licensing system email: [licence.enquiry@dwer.wa.gov.au](mailto:licence.enquiry@dwer.wa.gov.au)

If you are interested in water allocation planning for Exmouth, please contact us by emailing [allocation.planning@dwer.wa.gov.au](mailto:allocation.planning@dwer.wa.gov.au) or call one of our [Mid West Gascoyne Regional Offices](#) – Geraldton office on (08) 9965 7400 or Carnarvon office on (08) 9941 6100.