

Farmers criticise proposal

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Date: 06/11/2010

Words: 185

Source: NCH

Publication: Newcastle Herald

Section: News

Page: 16

HUNTER Valley land and water users have warned of potentially disastrous environmental consequences if a proposal to mine on alluvial plains is approved.

In their submissions to Coal & Allied's planned Carrington West project, the Upper Hunter Water Users Association and the NSW Farmers Federation said the project's economic benefits did not outweigh the environmental risks.

The project, located 24 kilometres north-west of Singleton, is being assessed under Part 3A of the state's planning laws.

In its application, Coal & Allied said a groundwater barrier wall would be installed to minimise possible seepage and damage to the river system.

"Coal & Allied has previously demonstrated alluvial land of a similar area can be successfully rehabilitated to productive agricultural land after mining," Hunter Valley Operations mine's general manager of operations, Graham Gageler, said.

But the project's opponents argue it is too close to the Hunter River.

"Alluvial plains in the Hunter are few and far between," NSW Farmers Federation's mining taskforce chairwoman Fiona Simson said.

"We believe that the value to the state of the \$400 million worth of coal that is there isn't worth the cost of destroying these areas."