

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 1335

asked on Wednesday, 25 October 2023

MR L MILLAR ASKED THE MINISTER FOR RESOURCES (HON S STEWART)—

QUESTION:

Will the Minister provide an update on monitoring surrounding the Baal Gammon remediation project, including (a) the results of water quality testing at Jamie Creek (reported separately by year for the last three years including levels of arsenic and cadmium), (b) whether Jamie Creek is still not suitable for drinking, domestic or recreational purposes and (c) any monitoring results for Walsh River, and outline whether these results exceed drinking water standards?

ANSWER:

Mining has been occurring at Baal Gammon for over 100 years and historic impacts on water quality in Jamie Creek are well known. The present day mine became “abandoned” in May 2019 and, since then, has been managed by the Department of Resources through the Abandoned Mine Lands Program (AMLPL).

The department undertakes regular water quality monitoring on site and in Jamie Creek adjacent and downstream of the mine, as well as in the Walsh River further downstream.

In 2019, when Baal Gammon was first abandoned, the average arsenic and cadmium concentrations recorded in Jamie Creek at Watsonville were 0.035 mg/L and 0.078 mg/L respectively.

In 2021, 2022 and 2023 (to date), the average arsenic concentrations recorded in Jamie Creek have been 0.01mg/L, 0.01mg/L, and 0.02mg/L. The average cadmium concentrations recorded at the same location in the same years have been 0.01mg/L, 0.006mg/L and 0.022mg/L respectively.

Water quality results confirm that water in Jamie Creek remains unsuitable for any purposes including drinking, domestic or recreational use. This has been communicated to the local community through signage and community engagement via meetings and newsletters.

Despite water quality present within Jamie Creek, the impact on the downstream Walsh River is minimal. Water sampled downstream of the mixing zone of the Walsh River and Jamie Creek is generally consistent with background water quality further upstream in the Walsh River.

Compared with drinking water health guidelines, Walsh River sampled downstream of the Jamie Creek confluence occasionally exceeds the drinking water health guideline value for arsenic, and regularly exceeds the drinking water aesthetic (for taste, colour or odour) guideline for iron, aluminium and turbidity in addition to recreational guideline values; however, these exceedances are each also present within the Walsh River upstream of the Jamie Creek confluence.

Walsh River water meets guideline values for irrigation and livestock use.