

MEDIA RELEASE

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Court Action Started Against Springvale Mine to Protect Sydney's Drinking Water

Conservation group 4nature has launched proceedings in the NSW Land and Environment Court challenging the NSW Government's approval of the Springvale underground coal mine due to its pollution of Sydney drinking water catchments.

4nature President, Andrew Cox, said, 'This case was launched to uphold the law and protect the water quality of a major Blue Mountains river and Sydney's drinking water.'

'The extension to the Springvale coal mine was approved in September, but we contend that the law applying to developments in Sydney's drinking water catchments, introduced to protect the quality of Sydney's drinking water, was not correctly applied.'

'The law requires that the NSW Government's Planning and Assessment Commission (PAC) had to be satisfied that the mine would have a "neutral or beneficial impact" on water quality. We say that the PAC was not satisfied, nor could it have been', said Mr Cox.

'Each day the mine is set to discharge up to 19 million litres of water laden with nutrients, salt, metals and other contaminants into the Coxs River before it flows into Warragamba Dam, Sydney's main drinking water supply.'

4nature's lawyers, environmental law experts EDO NSW (Environmental Defenders Office of NSW) filed the case on Friday 18 December. The Court will next consider the matter on 12 February 2016. Operations at Springvale will be unaffected until a final court ruling.

Blue Mountains Conservation Society spokesperson, Madi Maclean said, 'the Springvale coal mine extension would ruin endangered upland swamps and local streams and rivers. Credible evidence of predicted damage presented to the Planning Assessment Commission appears to have been ignored.'

Keith Muir, Director of the Colong Foundation for Wilderness said, 'groundwater pumped from the mine into the Coxs River catchment, if allowed to continue, will severely pollute the environment.'

Kate Smolski, Nature Conservation Council of NSW CEO said: 'This is another example of the Baird government's failure to protect Sydney's drinking water supplies from the impacts of coal mining.'

'It is regrettable that community has been forced to take court action to enforce government's own laws. It is about time the Baird government showed the leadership people expect by making sensitive natural areas and our water supplies no-go zones for coal and gas projects.'

Springvale coal mine is located 15km north west of Lithgow and has operated since 1995. A thirteen-year extension of the mine was granted on 21 September 2015. Springvale mine is owned by Centennial Springvale and SK Kores Australia.

4nature is a volunteer-based conservation group established in 2010 seeking to protect the natural environment in Australia and the South Pacific.

The case is supported by Blue Mountains Conservation Society, Nature Conservation Council of NSW, Colong Foundation for Wilderness, Lithgow Environment Group and National Parks Association of NSW.

Contacts:

4nature: Andrew Cox, President on 0438 588 040

Legal: Sue Higginson, Principal Solicitor EDO NSW on 0428 227 363

More information: 4nature.org