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# Joint media release

From Rous County Council and Ballina Shire Council

Thursday, 20 February 2020

**For immediate release**

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## Blackwater event occurring in parts of Richmond River

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Rous County Council, the local Flood Mitigation Authority, has been monitoring water quality after recent flooding of low-lying areas of the floodplain and advise that water in the Richmond River estuary is now low in dissolved oxygen.

Water running off these low-lying areas is low in oxygen, forming what is commonly known as Blackwater.

“Blackwater is created from plant matter breaking down or rotting in floodwater,” said Andrew Logan Planning Manager at Rous County Council. “Blackwater contains little or no oxygen, is dark in colour and has an unpleasant smell”.

The organic matter in Blackwater can consume large amounts of dissolved oxygen. When Blackwater enters rivers and creeks in large volumes, it can be harmful to fish and other aquatic life.

“Council has confirmed that dissolved oxygen levels are now critically low in parts of the estuary” said Andrew Logan. A dissolved oxygen level of 1.5mg/L was recorded yesterday at Woodburn and 1.1mg/L at Wardell in the main river channel.

Blackwater conditions are expected to persist until floodwaters leave the lowest lying areas and normal tidal flows resume, which will depend on weather conditions in the coming weeks.

Rous County Council is aware that a number of fish kills have occurred within the estuary, including North Creek last weekend, and Wardell yesterday. These fish kills have been reported to Department of Primary Industries.

Council will support the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) as the response agency for fish kills and has been liaising directly with Councils within the region, industry and community organisations.



Community members are encouraged to report any fish deaths or observations through to DPI at the Fishers Watch phonenumber on 1800 043 536.

Ballina Shire Council is also working closely with Rous County Council to monitor the current event. Many Ballina Shire residents have already observed the negative impact this event is having on fish and aquatic life in the lower estuary areas of the Richmond River.

Ballina Shire Council will continue to monitor local foreshores and beaches to ensure public safety. Residents are encouraged to contact Ballina Shire Council on 1300 864 444 if they are concerned about a particular public area, which may require cleaning up.

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For further information, please contact Rous County Council [council@rous.nsw.gov.au](mailto:council@rous.nsw.gov.au)

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### About Rous County Council

Rous County Council (RCC) is a multipurpose county council delivering bulk water, weed biosecurity and flood mitigation services to the Northern Rivers of NSW. RCC's constituent councils are Lismore, Ballina, Byron and Richmond Valley:

- **Bulk water:** The regional water supply authority. It provides water in bulk from its principal supply sources at Rocky Creek Dam and Emigrant Creek Dam servicing around 100,000 people.
- **Weed biosecurity:** The local control authority for weed biosecurity. Operations cover an area of more than a million hectares including Kyogle and Tweed shires, which are serviced by agreement with those councils.
- **Flood mitigation:** The flood mitigation authority across the local government areas of Ballina, Lismore and Richmond Valley.

RCC also operates Richmond Water Laboratories in Lismore, providing professional sampling and analytical testing services for water and soil to NSW councils, private industry and the public. The laboratory is National Association of Testing Authorities (NATA) accredited.

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