

FACT SHEET

Acid Sulfate Soils

What are Acid Sulfate Soils?

Acid sulfate soils (ASS) are natural soils that form in seawater or brackish water environments. These soils contain iron sulphides that are stable and do not cause a problem when waterlogged. However when they are exposed to air, after drainage or excavation, the soils rapidly form sulphuric acid.

This acid can leach into the surrounding area acidifying neighbouring drains, wetlands, creeks, estuaries and bays, causing severe environmental damage. It can affect industries such as fishing and tourism, and can impact on public and private infrastructure by causing serious damage to steel and concrete structures. Polluted water may also have health impacts.

Where do Acid Sulfate Soils occur?

ASS occur in low-lying coastal areas less than 5 metres above the high tide level. In NSW ASS have been found on every coastal estuary and embayment.

Maps Indicating ASS

The NSW Government's ASS planning maps show areas that may be affected by the presence of ASS. These maps identify 5 classes of land, with Class 1 being the highest risk of ASS.

According to the NSW ASS Maps, ASS occur in the following areas in Randwick City:

- Class 1 – in Port Botany
- Class 2 – in Port Botany, Matraville and Phillip Bay.
- Class 3 - **Nil** in Randwick City.
- Class 4 – mostly in Coogee, Maroubra, Malabar, Matraville and Philip Bay.
- Class 5 – mostly in Coogee, Maroubra, Malabar and Matraville, Chifley, Philip Bay, Little Bay and La Perouse.

Areas affected by these ASS classes in Randwick City have also been identified on the Randwick Local Environmental Plan 2012 (RLEP) – Acid Sulfate Soils Map (refer to the RLEP Map for details). Refer to the attached map for ASS classes for the Port Botany area (areas subject to the Three Ports SEPP).

What if I want to develop land identified as being Acid Sulfate Soil?

Acid sulfate soils are manageable.

Development proposals do, however, need to recognise and plan for any constraints that these soils are likely to pose for development.

The NSW ASS Manual and ASS Guidelines prepared by the State Government provide advice on best practice in planning, assessment and management of activities in areas containing acid sulfate soils. The Manual and Guidelines can be found on the NSW Planning and Environment website www.planning.nsw.gov.au

The Randwick Local Environmental Plan 2012 (RLEP) also contains provisions (Clause 6.1 – Acid Sulfate Soils) for development on land that is affected by ASS, in line with the NSW ASS Manual and Guidelines. The RLEP provisions aim to ensure that development does not disturb, expose or drain ASS and cause environmental damage.

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The RLEP identify the types of work (in each ASS class) that are likely to present an environmental risk and require development consent. The RLEP further requires the submission of an ASS management plan (prepared in accordance with the ASS Manual) to the consent authority before development consent can be granted. However, development consent is not required if a preliminary assessment of the proposed works (prepared in accordance with the NSW ASS Manual) indicates that a management plan is not required.

The RLEP (including the RLEP Maps) can be viewed on the NSW Legislation website at www.legislation.nsw.gov.au or Council's website at www.randwick.nsw.gov.au

Further information can also be obtained from the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage website at www.environment.nsw.gov.au

Enquiries

If you have further enquires about the RLEP provisions on ASS, contact Council's Strategic Planning Department on 9399 0992.

For enquires regarding the NSW ASS Manual and associated Guidelines, contact the NSW Planning and Environment on 9228 6333.

