

Sydney's drinking water catchments



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What is a catchment?

A catchment is an area where water is collected by the landscape. In a catchment, all rain and run-off water eventually flows to a creek, river, lake or ocean - or into the groundwater system.

Where are Sydney's drinking water catchments?

Five main catchments provide drinking water to Sydney and surrounds:

- Warragamba
- Shoalhaven
- Woronora
- Upper Nepean
- Blue Mountains

These catchments cover an area of almost 16,000 square kilometres. They extend from north of Lithgow in the upper Blue Mountains, to the source of the Shoalhaven River near Cooma in the south - and from Woronora in the east to the source of the Wollondilly River west of Crookwell.

Almost 5 million people, or about 60% of the NSW population, consume water supplied by these catchments.

What are the Special Areas?

About 3,700 square kilometres of land within these catchments are known as 'Special Areas'. These are large areas of mostly unspoilt bushland surrounding the reservoirs that provide drinking water for Sydney, the Blue Mountains and the Illawarra.

Special Areas are vital to the protection of our drinking water because they help filter out unsafe nutrients and other substances before the water reaches the reservoirs.

The Special Areas are managed by WaterNSW and the National Parks and Wildlife Service, under the Special Area Plan of Management. Public access to the Special Areas is restricted to protect water quality.

Further information is available from the WaterNSW website at www.waternsw.com.au or by telephone 1300 622 077.