ADVICE TO THE COMMUNITY ON INJURED TURTLES

Bellingen Shire Council is continuing to work closely with NSW Government agencies to respond to an unusual mortality event involving freshwater turtles in the Bellinger River.

The first round of results have shown no traces of pesticide or hydrocarbon in water samples the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) took from the Bellinger River, supporting the initial observations that the turtle deaths and sickness are not related to a pollution incident. The EPA is still waiting on some final test results, due early next week, and this will help to narrow down a possible cause further.

Reptile experts are concerned that a potential disease agent although currently restricted to the George’s River Turtles, may be transmitted to other healthy turtle populations in other sections of the river.

To minimise the potential spread of the illness, the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, Bellingen Shire Council and supporting agencies urge residents to refrain from searching for or handling sick or injured turtles or moving turtles or equipment from possibly infected areas into other sections of the river system.

A spokesperson from the North Coast Public Health Unit has reinforced the message, that in the interest of human health and animal welfare, members of the public should avoid handling the affected turtles whilst the issue is being investigated.

… ENDS

Authorised by  Liz Jeremy, General Manager
Date: 27 February 2015

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Daan Schiebaan, Manager Sustainable Environment & Waste on 6655 7300.

ALL COMMUNICATIONS TO BE ADDRESSED TO THE GENERAL MANAGER,
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