



Friends of Stradbroke Island Association Inc.

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AN OPEN LETTER TO MR TURNBULL, MR SHORTEN AND MR DE NATALE EMAILED TO EACH LEADER AND THEIR PARTIES ON 22 JUNE, 2016

We write to ask you to pledge, before the July 2 Election, that our national environment protection laws will be enforced against privately owned Belgian sand mining company Sibelco which is mining fragile North Stradbroke Island, on the doorstep of Brisbane. For links to our correspondence last year with Environment Minister Greg Hunt, we refer to this Save Straddie Facebook post last Saturday - https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=1099301450142359&id=123257177746796

Straddie, as is widely known, is the second largest sand island in the world. Fraser Island, world heritage listed, is the largest. Straddie shares many of Fraser's attractions, but it also has its own eg a unique, genetically distinct population of koalas, whose habitat is being cleared for sand mining at Sibelco's 'Enterprise' mine.

In 2004 the 'Enterprise' mine commenced. As you can see from the attached image mining is taking place very close to important, internationally recognised wetlands – part of the Moreton Bay Ramsar site declared in 1993. These wetlands are supposed to be protected by the Ramsar treaty and the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act. The EPBC Act became our national environment protection law in July, 2000.

Before mining near such sensitive, EPBC Act recognised areas, because of the obvious risks mining companies are legally obliged to apply for approval from the Federal Government. But mining commenced at the Enterprise Mine in 2004 without an application being made. Successive Federal Governments have turned a blind eye.

FOSI sent a detailed complaint to the Federal Environment Department in September, 2012. After an already ridiculously long investigation, last August we were advised by Environment Minister, Greg Hunt, that his department's investigation was "nearing completion". But that proved to be yet another furphy. Almost a year later, Sibelco is still getting away with thumbing its nose at our environment laws.

There have been numerous mine 'incidents' which have already caused environmental damage to Straddie's off lease wetlands. Some have been admitted by the mining company in official reports, for example the piercing of perched Lake Kounpee from nearby mining activities, and in 2000, the flooding of the Ibis lagoon area due to activities at the Ibis mine. A large oil spill near Amity wetlands was yet another incident. The risks of mining such a sensitive environment are obvious and have been recognised officially since the Fraser Island Inquiry Report in 1976.

But as both major parties are aware, our detailed complaint also included scientific evidence that the

Enterprise mine has caused and is continuing to cause significant impacts to the Ramsar wetlands adjacent to the mine – the 18 Mile Swamp to the east and the Ibis Lagoon System to the west.

Sibelco is controversial for other reasons. It paid no income tax on earnings of \$412 Million last year and has somehow avoided a genuine criminal prosecution after the Supreme Court of Queensland found that it had unlawfully removed and sold large quantities of Stradbroke Island non-mineral sand. Its ‘Enterprise’ mine is also the second largest emitter in SEQ of dangerous particulate matter. It was also involved in what Deputy Premier Jackie Trad at the time described as a ‘cash for legislation deal’ with the Newman Government. Since December last year, the Save Straddie Facebook site has posted details and links to relevant official documents and records.

Sibelco should be required to seek approval for its mine, which is not scheduled to close until 31 December, 2019, and should suffer the consequences for continuing to mine without approval under the EPBC Act. Otherwise, this example will demonstrate that our national environment laws are not enforced by our Federal Government against foreign companies.

We ask you to pledge, by next Wednesday, 29 June that you will, if in a position to do so after the election, enforce federal environment protection laws on North Stradbroke Island. Please email your responses to the email address referred to in the email forwarding this letter to you.

Yours sincerely,
Sue Ellen Carew
President

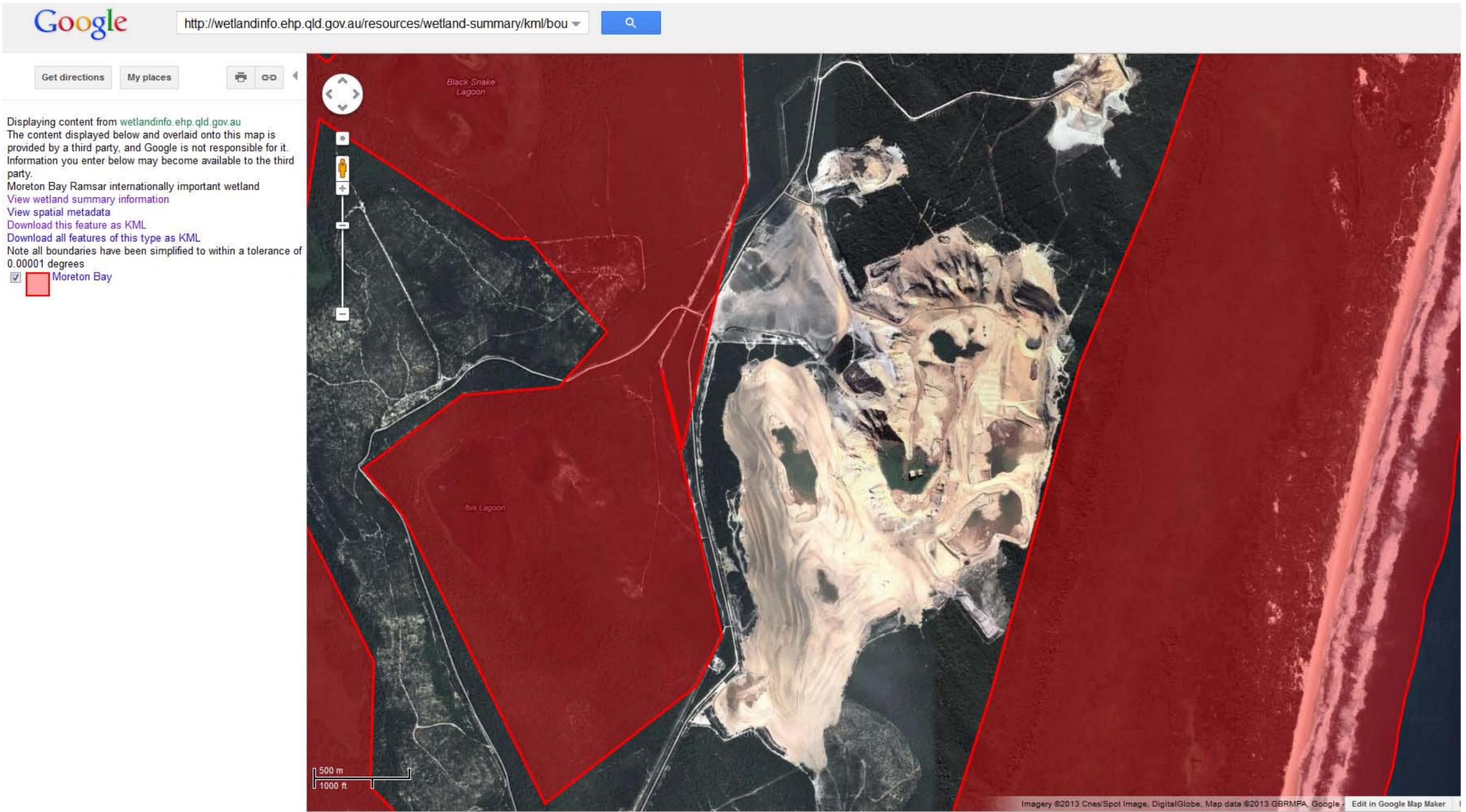


Figure A2 - Satellite image of Enterprise Mine on North Stradbroke Island overlaid with Moreton Bay Ramsar Wetland boundaries (in red)

Source: Queensland Government Department of Environment and Heritage Protection website at <http://wetlandinfo.ehp.qld.gov.au/wetlands/facts-maps/ramsar-wetland-moreton-bay/> viewed 27/5/2013