New South Wales

MINISTER FOR PRIMARY INDUSTRIES

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SNOWY CLOUD SEEDING TRIAL CONTINUES INTO SECOND YEAR

The second year of a six-year cloud seeding research project in the Snowy Mountains has begun, the State Government said today.

NSW Minister for Primary Industries, Ian Macdonald, said generators that release seeding agents into winter storm clouds were recently turned on for the first time this season, following a suitable winter storm front.

“This research project is specifically designed to increase the amount of snow cover in a defined area of the Snowy Mountains region,” Mr Macdonald said.

“We want to test cloud seeding in this area, as a possible way of helping offset the impacts that global warming is having on our alpine environment.

“In addition, the extra snow generated could create up to 70 gigalitres of water when the snow melts in the spring. This equals 70,000 Olympic sized swimming pools.”

Mr Macdonald said the Snowy Mountains provide the ideal conditions for the cloud seeding project, given the greater consistency of winter storm cloud systems and the fact that those clouds have an abundance of supercooled vapour, to create snow.

“Samples taken from within the defined area during year-one show an increase in snow precipitation by an average of 25%,” Mr Macdonald said.

“At the outset of the trial, the goal was to increase snow depth in the target area by up to 10% each season, so year-one preliminary indicators were very promising.

“The signs are also strong that year-one generated additional run-off, but we need more scientific evidence over the next several seasons to verify this.

“If the six-year project is successful, we could have an innovative new tool to help reverse declining snow levels, increase water flow, and boost tourism through a slightly longer snow season.”

The cloud seeding research project is targeting a 1,000km2 area in the Kosciuszko National Park. It excludes the Jagungal Wilderness Area.

Cloud seeding is carried out during winter storms, targeting alpine areas only. It involves the use of ground-based generators to send minute amounts of silver iodide into winter storm clouds. An inert tracer agent helps to measure and evaluate the snow generated.

Year-one of the project was designed to test the network of scientific instruments and determine effectiveness of targeting and where and when to use the seeding agent. In the remaining snow seasons, seeding will be randomised with two-thirds of the suitable storm fronts actually seeded.

The project is fully funded and administered by Snowy Hydro Limited, which intends to use the extra water flows to help generate additional renewable electricity.

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