



Ensham revisits Emerald project

John McCarthy

BRISBANE-based Ensham Resources has overcome floods, the global financial crisis and farmer outrage to finally submit plans for a \$1.2 billion coal project near Emerald, in central Queensland.

The project, known as Ensham Central, will initially employ about 480 people in 2010 and cut 830ha from a previous mine plan that angered farming communities over loss of productive land on the Nogoia River floodplain.

The project will have a major economic impact on the region with salaries and wages of up to \$87.5 million a year to be injected into local towns while state and federal governments will receive about \$85 million a year in taxes and Queensland Rail and Gladstone Port Corporation will earn another \$154 million a year.

The new scheme means the mine will also reduce its potential impact on the river and will not have to build an additional 12km of levee banks.

The company had planned a massive open cut mine but in January 2008 "unprecedented" floods inundated its existing mine and its new plan was put on the backburner.

Then came the collapse of the global commodity markets and farmer anger over the loss of productive land in the area.

Ensham chief executive Peter Westerhuis said the project would secure the long-term future of around 3000 direct and indirect jobs.

"While we still have a number of significant approval milestones to reach before the project proceeds, we are in the process of talking to a range of key stakeholders about the

revised mining methodology for the Ensham Central Project," Mr Westerhuis said.

Farming group FutureFood Queensland applauded the announcement.

"We have only a small area of prime agricultural soils in Queensland, and for too long we have seen our best and most productive lands unnecessarily destroyed," co-chair Charlie Wilson said.

"With 300 years' supply of coal and diminishing food production capacity, we have the opportunity to work to increase the economic pie, not divide it by sacrificing prime farmland."

The Ensham proposal, which still needs Federal Government approval, came as the Senate announced an investigation into mining on prime agricultural land in southern Queensland and northern NSW.

Farmers on the Liverpool Plains in NSW and at Felton and Haystack Road on Queensland's Darling Downs have been battling against plans to mine the areas for coal.



FUTURE: Peter Westerhuis CEO of Ensham Resources.