



Threatened: Craig Underwood with cattle at a soak on his farm. He fears State restrictions will reduce the value of his property.

Picture: Nic Ellis

# "WATER" + "PROPERTY RIGHTS" (West Aust pg) 4/3/09

## Farmers fear water plan will curb land use

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Jurien Bay farmers fear a plan to protect underground water supplies will restrict how they use their land.

The farmers say the State Government may have to compensate them or buy their land.

The Jurien Bay regional plan is among dozens that have been implemented by the Department of Water in a bid to prevent the contamination of public drinking water sources.

Farmers affected by the plan claim new classifications on their property leave their futures uncertain.

Craig Underwood said one-quarter of his 1600ha property had been placed under Priority 1 classification, which meant farming

was "incompatible" with the protection of underground water sources in the area.

He had been told he could continue with his land use despite the classification, but feared that could change.

The rest of his property had been classified as Priority 2, which meant he could be subject to controls on fertiliser and pesticide applications and stocking rates for sheep or cattle.

Mr Underwood fears the classifications will reduce the value of his property, arguing the State Government should buy Priority 1 classified land or compensate owners at a "fair and reasonable" rate.

"If you are farming on land which is strictly classified as non-conforming land use, you are totally at the whim of the minister of the day

or the director-general of the Department of Water," he said. "Imagine what that does to your land values. It also impinges on our ability to compete for finance."

He said there had been no impact on the region's aquifer over the past 40 years of farming.

WA has 92 drinking water source protection plans, with more to come.

Water Minister Graham Jacobs said the Jurien issues had been considered through many of the existing plans to ensure safe, good quality drinking water.

Following a recent meeting with farmers, Dr Jacobs said he had asked the department to examine whether changes could be made to Priority 1 classifications in the region while maintaining regional water quality.