



South Australia

River Murray Water Resources Report



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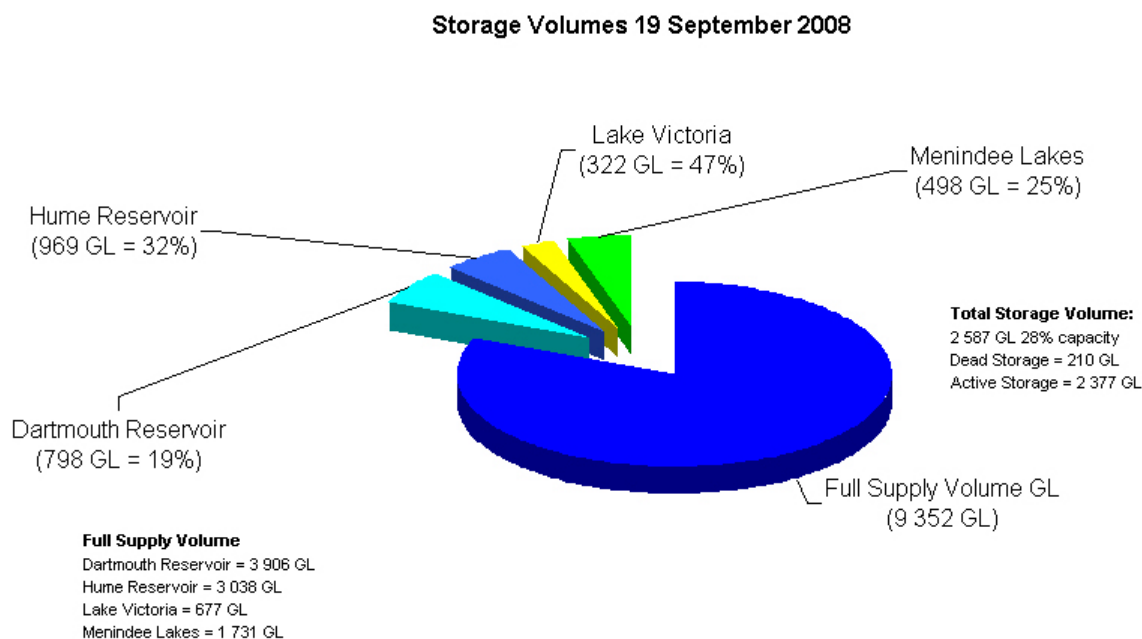
Observations at a glance

- River Murray irrigation allocations will increase from 6% to 11% from 1 October 2008 following a small improvement in the volume of water available to South Australia.
- The volume of water in upstream storages is currently 2 587 GL (27% capacity), compared to about 2 113 GL (23% capacity) at the same time last year.
- Inflows into the River Murray remain at critically low levels. During August 2008, only 280 GL flowed into the River Murray system.
- A decision whether or not to construct a temporary weir below Wellington is on hold following improvement in conditions in the Lower Lakes.
- The South Australian Government has outlined its case for a short-term freshwater solution for the Lower Lakes at the Senate inquiry hearing into water management in the Coorong and Lower Lakes on Friday, 19 September 2008.
- Irrigation allocation projections for 2008-09 have been updated to reflect the end of August 2008 water resources assessment provided by the Murray-Darling Basin Commission.

Murray-Darling Basin storages

The volume of water in storage in Hume and Dartmouth Reservoirs, Lake Victoria and Menindee Lakes is currently 2 587 GL (27% capacity), compared to about 2 113 GL (23% capacity) at the same time last year. Storage levels are shown in **Figure 1**.

Figure 1: Storage levels at 19 September 2008



River Murray inflows

Inflows into the River Murray remain at critically low levels. During August 2008, only 280 GL flowed into the River Murray system. This is lower than the 357 GL received in August 2007 and significantly lower than the long-term August average of 1 550 GL.

Water allocations in South Australia

River Murray irrigation allocations will increase from 6% to 11% from 1 October 2008 due to a small improvement in the volume of water available to South Australia following the end of August 2008 water availability assessment by the Murray-Darling Basin Commission. While inflows are still below average, they have provided South Australia with a small amount of water for irrigation and paying off our drought imbalance, which now stands at 25.5 GL.

Maximising the amount of water available to irrigators as early as possible in the season is essential to help producers plan their irrigation for the year. In October last year, allocations were at 16%.

Allocation updates will continue to be issued on the 15th of each month and information on water resource conditions will be available on the 1st of each month, or the first business day following if either day falls on a weekend.

For more information about conditions in the River Murray or wider Murray-Darling Basin visit www.dwlbc.sa.gov.au/murray/drought/index.html

Water allocations in New South Wales and Victoria

New South Wales and Victoria also made allocation announcements on 15 September 2008.

In New South Wales, Murray Valley high security water licence holders can now access 50% of their licensed water entitlement (an increase of 25%), while Murrumbidgee Valley high security licence holders can now access 75% (an increase of 15%). These increases have resulted from local inflows. For further information about NSW allocations, please visit: www.naturalresources.nsw.gov.au/mediarelnr/mm20080915_3928.html

In Victoria, Goulburn-Murray Water announced the first seasonal allocations for the Murray and Goulburn systems. Customers in the Murray system will receive an allocation of 6% for high-reliability water shares. The Goulburn system has an allocation of 4% for high-reliability water shares. The allocations of all other water systems in northern Victoria remain at zero. For further information about NSW allocations, please visit www.g-mwater.com.au/news/media-releases/media-releases-2008/allocations20080915.html

Temporary weir update

Minister for the River Murray, Karlene Maywald, says the decision on whether or not to construct a temporary weir below Wellington is on hold following improvement in conditions in the Lower Lakes due to local rainfall and inflows to the Lower Lakes from streams in the eastern Mount Lofty Ranges.

"However, severe drought conditions are continuing in the Murray-Darling Basin and while the State Government still regards the weir as a last resort, we must continue preparatory works in case a weir is needed as an emergency measure," Minister Maywald said.

As a result, preliminary site access works will continue, including construction of an access road, as soon as possible once relevant approvals have been received. For further information, see the Minister's full media release at: www.dwlbc.sa.gov.au/media.html

Senate inquiry

The South Australian Government has outlined its case for a short-term freshwater solution for the Lower Lakes at a hearing on Friday, 19 September 2008 of a Senate Standing Committee's inquiry into water management in the Coorong and Lower Lakes. Minister Maywald says it is the South Australian Government's preference for the Lower Lakes to remain a freshwater environment.

"It is estimated that the volume of freshwater needed to manage the risk of acidification in the Lower Lakes until the end of September next year is 60 billion litres," she said.

"This additional 60 GL of freshwater would allow more time for the drought to break and more rainfall and inflows during the winter and early Spring in 2009 before a decision on future management options for the Lower Lakes would be required."

"We are expecting this volume of water could be contributed from local rainfall and inflows, unregulated flows from a significant rainfall event upstream or through the Murray-Darling Basin shared resource."

"South Australia's objective is to maintain the Lower Lakes in a freshwater condition for as long as is practically possible, and preferably through the current extreme drought through to a full freshwater recovery."

"We acknowledge that the introduction of some seawater may be necessary as a last resort option if the drought continues beyond the middle of next year."

For further information, see the Minister's full media release at:
www.dwlbc.sa.gov.au/media.html

Salinity and water levels

Water levels in the weir pools above Lock 1 are being maintained at, or very close to, full supply levels and salinity remains fairly low.

Downstream of Lock 1 salinity levels remain high due to low water levels. Salinity in Lake Alexandrina (at Milang) is currently 4 057 EC compared to about 2 490 EC at the same time last year. Salinity in Lake Albert (at Meningie) is currently 5 198 EC compared to about 2 450 EC at the same time last year.

The water level in Lake Alexandrina (at Milang) is currently -0.24m AHD, compared to about 0.23m AHD at the same time last year. The water level in Lake Albert (at Meningie) is currently -0.19m AHD, compared to about 0.21m AHD at the same time last year.

Table 1 shows the current water levels and salinity at selected locations.

Table 1: Water and salinity levels at 19 September 2008

| | Actual Water Levels at 19/09/08 | | Full Supply Level Level | Variation from Pool Level | Current EC Level |
|---|---------------------------------|-----------|-------------------------|---------------------------|------------------|
| | U/S m AHD | D/S m AHD | U/S of Weir m AHD | U/S of Weir m AHD | |
| Lock 6 | 19.23 | 16.26 | 19.25 | -0.02 | 249 |
| Lock 5 | 16.29 | 13.23 | 16.30 | -0.01 | 276 |
| Lock 4 | 13.17 | 10.07 | 13.20 | -0.03 | 428 |
| Lock 3 | 9.77 | 6.21 | 9.80 | -0.03 | 529 |
| Lock 2 | 6.10 | 3.32 | 6.10 | 0.00 | 581 |
| Lock 1 | 3.20 | -0.08 | 3.20 | 0.00 | 529 |
| Lake Alexandrina (Milang) | -0.24 | | | | 4 057 |
| Lake Albert (Meningie) | -0.19 | | | | 5 198 |
| Goolwa | -0.16 | | | | 14 039 |
| Lake Alexandrina and Albert water and salinity Levels based on 5 day average | | | | | |
| Water levels below Lock 1 are affected by wind and will vary throughout the day | | | | | |
| EC Readings below Lock 1 are daily averages and will vary throughout the day | | | | | |

Irrigation allocation projections for 2008-09

Irrigation allocation projections for 2008-09 have been updated and may be found on DWLBC's website at

www.dwlbc.sa.gov.au/murray/drought/index.html#Irrigationallocationprojectionsfor200809

The revised projections are based on the end of August 2008 assessment provided by the Murray-Darling Basin Commission on the River Murray water resources available for sharing between South Australia, New South Wales and Victoria. The projections have been calculated using data that take into account the low inflow conditions in the River Murray system over the last few years. The projections also take into account the need to share water between irrigation, critical needs reserve for 2009-10, environmental use and flows into the Lower Lakes. If inflows conditions remain low, it will be difficult to provide sufficient water for all competing demands.

Further information on River Murray conditions and rainfall forecasts can be obtained from the following websites:

Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation www.dwlbc.sa.gov.au

SA Murray-Darling Basin NRM Board www.samdbnrm.sa.gov.au

Murray-Darling Basin Commission www.mdbc.gov.au

SA Water Daily Reports www.riverland.net.au/~heinz/mdbcrep.htm

Bureau of Meteorology www.bom.gov.au

Queensland Department of Primary Industry www.longpaddock.qld.gov.au

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