



South Australia

River Murray Water Resources Report



ISSUE 29: 19 December 2008

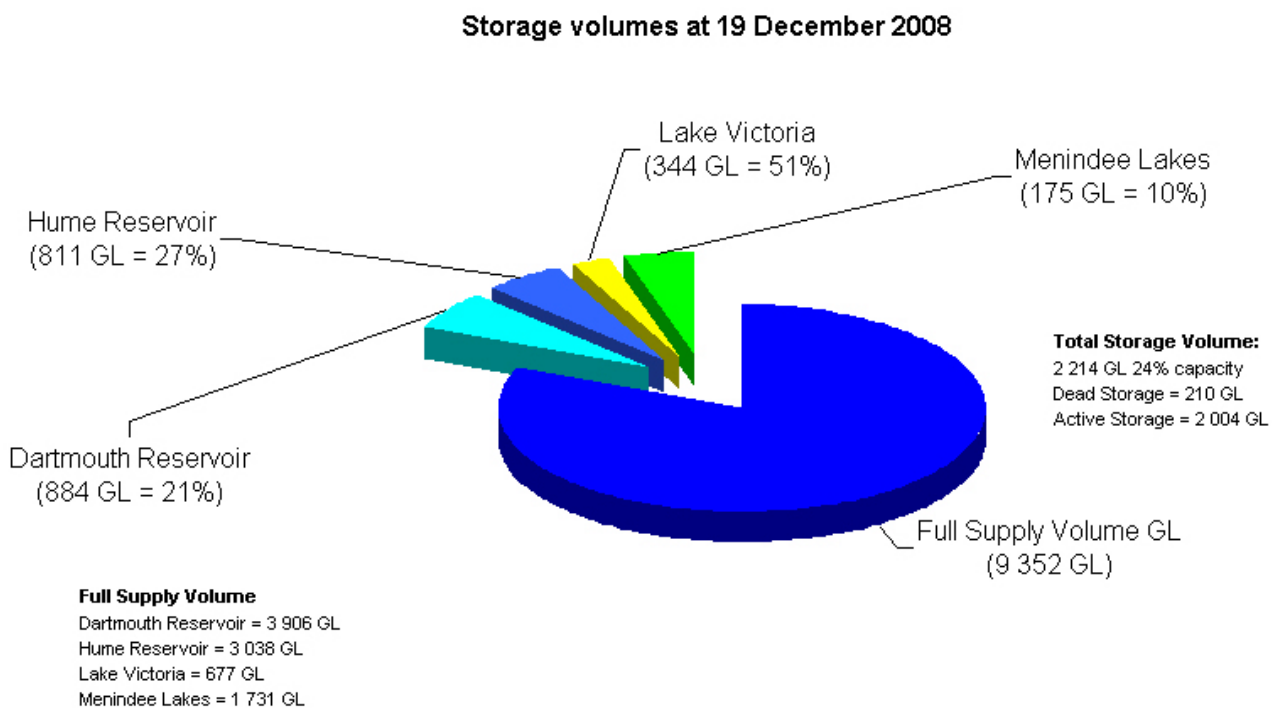
Observations at a glance

- River Murray irrigation allocations will remain at 15% from 1 January as the current extreme drought continues in the Murray-Darling Basin.
- The volume of water in upstream storages is currently 2 214 GL (24% capacity), compared to about 1 782 GL (19% capacity) at the same time last year.
- Below Lock 1 water levels remain low and salinity levels remain high due to reduced flows into South Australia.

Murray-Darling Basin storages

The volume of water in storage in Hume and Dartmouth Reservoirs, Lake Victoria and Menindee Lakes is currently 2 214 GL (24% capacity), compared to about 1 782 GL (19% capacity) at the same time last year. Current storage levels are shown in **Figure 1**.

Figure 1: Storage levels at 19 December 2008



River Murray inflows

River Murray system inflows remain at low levels. During November 2008 only 140 GL flowed into the River Murray system, which is well below the long-term average of 770 GL. This compares to an average November inflow of about 468 GL.

From June to November 2008 about 1 420 GL has been received, well below the long-term average of 7 200 GL. The average inflow for the same period over the past 10 years is 3 650 GL. The inflow for the same period during 2007-08 was about 1 580 GL.

The outlook for any significant inflow improvement in the River Murray system remains poor despite good rainfall in November and December 2008. The catchments have remained extremely dry and therefore several heavy rainfall events in quick succession are required to produce runoff.

Salinity and water levels

Salinity levels above Lock 1 remain fairly low. However, downstream of Lock 1 salinity levels remain high due to low water levels. Salinity in Lake Alexandrina (at Milang) is currently 4 983 EC compared to about 2 964 EC at the same time last year. Salinity in Lake Albert (at Meningie) is currently 6 668 EC compared to about 2 993 EC at the same time last year.

The water level in Lake Alexandrina (at Milang) is currently -0.47m AHD, compared to about -0.05m AHD at the same time last year. The water level in Lake Albert (at Meningie) is currently -0.45m AHD, compared to about 0.03m 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 selected locations

	Actual Water Levels at 19/12/08		Full Supply Level Level	Variation from Pool Level	Current EC Level
	U/S mAHD	D/S m AHD	U/S of Weir m AHD	U/S of Weir m AHD	
Lock 6	19.22	16.34	19.25	-0.03	295
Lock 5	16.34	13.31	16.30	0.04	285
Lock 4	13.24	10.15	13.20	0.04	323
Lock 3	9.84	6.35	9.80	0.04	357
Lock 2	6.25	3.41	6.10	0.15	405
Lock 1	3.32	-0.28	3.20	0.12	507
Lake Alexandrina (Milang)	-0.47				4 983
Lake Albert (Meningie)	-0.45				6 668
Goolwa	-0.51				n/a
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					

River operations

The flow to South Australia is currently only 4 300 ML/day, compared to the normal entitlement flow for December of 7 000 ML/day. A flow of 4 300 ML/day across the border will provide for a flow of about 1 450 ML/day over Lock 1 to meet SA Water pumping demands, estimated losses and diversions while still maintaining a flow into Lake Alexandrina.

Recent rain along the River Murray in South Australia has helped to recover water levels in weir pools above Lock 1. Prior to this rain many pools were below normal full supply level, which would not have been an ideal position going into summer.

While the weir pools above Lock 1 have recovered, water levels below Lock 1 continue to be at record low levels.

Water allocations in South Australia and interstate

South Australia

River Murray irrigation allocations will remain at 15% from 1 January 2009 as drought conditions continue across the Murray-Darling Basin. Just 140 GL flowed into the system during November, well below the long-term November average of 771 GL. There was a very small improvement of 35 GL allocated to South Australia, which has been reserved for critical human needs in 2009-10.

For further information see the Minister's full 15 December announcement at http://www.dwlbc.sa.gov.au/assets/files/MR_allocations_15dec08.pdf

New South Wales and Victoria

The latest allocation announcement issued in New South Wales can be found here: www.naturalresources.nsw.gov.au/mediarelnr/mr_toc_currnr.html

The latest allocation announcement issued in Victoria can be found here: www.g-mwater.com.au/news/media-releases/media-releases-2008/

Purchase of water for the environment

The South Australian Government continues to seek offers from willing sellers to sell part or all of their River Murray water entitlements to The Living Murray Program. Water sold to The Living Murray is held in perpetuity on a South Australian licence from which water can only be taken for environmental use.

Water eligible for The Living Murray Program must be a South Australian entitlement. Purchases of any volume will be considered for sale at current market price. Water entitlements for which the 2008-09 allocation has been used can be offered for sale.

Enquiries should be directed to SA Water as agent for the Minister for the River Murray. Contact Doug Gee on (08) 8204 2172 or 0418 839 949.

Weather outlook

The Bureau of Meteorology's rainfall and temperature outlook for January to March 2009 shows there is a 50% chance of exceeding median rainfall over the Murray-Darling Basin. It also shows there is a 55% chance of exceeding median maximum temperatures.

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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