
MEDIA RELEASE

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River Murray water resources update

17 January 2011

Recent rainfall across the Murray-Darling Basin will help to improve inflows in a number of catchments, including south-east Queensland, the Barwon-Darling River system, Murrumbidgee River and a number of other rivers in Victoria that flow into the River Murray system.

While flow at some locations along rivers in regional Victoria has been reported as being above 1956 levels, this is highly unlikely to result in a 1956-level flow event in the River Murray system. With continuing rainfalls during summer and into next water year, it is possible that higher flows from most catchments will be observed, leading to higher River Murray system inflows.

River Murray system inflow continues to remain well above the long-term average. During December 2010 the inflow was 3000 GL - the highest recorded inflow for December. The long-term average is 420 GL. River Murray system inflow during January 2011 is also forecast to be above the long-term average and will increase as a result of rainfall last week across the Campaspe and Loddon Rivers.

This will result in the River Murray system receiving six consecutive months of above-average inflow and providing for recovery from the drought. Some areas are receiving water for the first time in more than a decade.

The environment during these periods of high flow consumes significant volumes of water, particularly when overbank flows occur. The River Murray system inflow for the year to date (including the Darling River) is approximately 13,220 GL, which is in the highest 20 per cent of inflow records.

The high inflow into Menindee Lakes and downstream of the major River Murray storages means very little water has been released for consumptive use and a large volume will be held in storage for the states in 2011-12. The total volume of water held in the storages controlled by the Murray-Darling Basin Authority is 7,212 GL or 78 per cent capacity.

As previously announced, South Australia will receive its full entitlement flow of 1,850 GL in 2010-11 and is confident of receiving its full normal Entitlement Flow of 1,850 GL for 2011-12. There is also a high chance of unregulated flows in 2011-12, particularly if catchments remain wet.

South Australia has received a significant volume of water - more than 6,000 GL - so far in 2010-11. This includes about 4,370 GL of Unregulated Flow and Additional Dilution Flow, which are now expected until the end of July 2011. Flow to South Australia could exceed 8,000 GL based on the current flow conditions across the Murray-Darling Basin. This will be the highest flow since 1996-97, when 10,330 GL flowed across the border.

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High flow is expected to remain into March 2011. South Australia is likely to receive a peak flow of 80,000 ML/day in late January to early February 2011. Recent rainfall may cause temporary rises in flow and changed river operations upstream of South Australia can also affect forecasts.

Flow to South Australia is expected to remain within the range of 65,000 ML/day to 75,000 ML/day over the next week, depending on river operations, water use and weather conditions upstream of South Australia.

Another peak flow expected to occur due to the recent rainfall in Victoria will arrive in the River Murray on a “falling river” and is not likely at this stage to result in a larger peak flow (above what was already observed in 2010). This flow could result in another peak to South Australia of 80,000 ML/day towards mid to late February 2011. This is sensitive to the flow from the Murrumbidgee River and releases from Menindee Lakes.

A flow of 80,000 ML/day does not pose a major risk to South Australia. South Australia will continue to monitor the situation and a further update will be provided through the River Murray Flow Advice to be issued on Friday 21 January 2011. The higher flow is providing numerous ecological benefits for the River Murray, Lower Lakes and portions of the floodplains.

Weekly River Murray Flow Advice updates are being provided on Friday afternoon while high flow conditions persist. All interested parties are encouraged to visit www.waterforgood.sa.gov.au. Water level information is also available from SA Water on (08) 8595 2299.

A Flood Watch has been issued for the River Murray to alert of possible future flooding and to raise awareness and prepare the community in advance. To ensure you stay safe and enjoy the river please practice the following:

- Don't drive, ride or walk through floodwaters, flood affected causeways or roads.
- Be aware that significant debris is being carried downstream and may pose a hazard to water-based activities.
- Landholders, especially those with shacks or other structures in low-lying areas, should consider securing their property from likely rising water levels.
- The hazards associated with riverbank collapse still exist in many areas so be aware of the signs - such as cracked riverbanks and leaning trees - and keep away from fenced or sign-posted affected areas.
- Regularly monitor river levels in your local area, and take care not to become isolated by rising water.
- Always wear a personal floatation device when on the river.
- Do not jump or dive into the river when you do not know what is below the surface.
- Camp on higher ground away from the river bank.
- Supervise children at all times and do not allow them to play in or near floodwater or fast-flowing river water.



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- If in doubt, stay out.
- Listen and take action on any instructions from the emergency services - the SES, SA Police and the CFS.

For more information about conditions in the River Murray or wider Murray-Darling Basin visit www.mdba.gov.au



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