

RIVER MURRAY FLOW REPORT and WATER RESOURCES UPDATE

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Report #20/2014

Issued 10:00 am 16 May 2014

This supersedes the previous flow report issued by the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources (DEWNR) on 9 May 2014. The next flow report will be provided on Friday, 23 May 2014.

In this report, for ease of representation, large volumes of water are expressed in gigalitres (GL), while smaller volumes are expressed in megalitres (ML). One GL is equal to 1 000 ML.

WATER RESOURCES UPDATE

During April 2014, the total River Murray System inflow was approximately 180 GL, which is below the April long-term average of 260 GL. Inflow to Menindee Lakes (from the Darling System) during April 2014 was 0 GL, which is well below the April long-term average of 230 GL.

The flow to South Australia during April 2014 was approximately 183 GL (compared to 220 GL in April 2013). The flow comprised of the following:

- April Entitlement Flow of 135 GL;
- Less 11 GL of non-environmental water allocation trades;
- Less 11 GL of April Entitlement Flow delivered in March 2014 to mitigate flow delivery risks in April as a result of the construction works on the Lake Victoria outlet regulator;
- Less 6.6 GL deferred for private carryover use in future dry years;
- Plus approximately 76 GL of environmental water from the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder.

The flow to South Australia is currently around 3 700 ML/day, which comprises the May Entitlement Flow of 3 000 ML/day, plus environmental water. The Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder will deliver around 18 GL of environmental water to South Australia in May 2014.

STORAGE VOLUMES

Murray-Darling Basin storage volumes at 14 May 2014 and 14 May 2013

Storage	Full Supply Volume (GL)	14/5/2014 (GL)	14/5/2013 (GL)	Long-term average (end of May)
Dartmouth	3 856	3 431 (89%)	3 572 (93%)	
Hume	3 003	1 172 (39%)	1 342 (45%)	
Lake Victoria	677	445 (66%)	336 (50%)	
Menindee Lakes	1 731*	376**(22%)	1 255 (73%)	
TOTAL	9 267	5 424 (59%)	6 505 (70%)	5 728 (62%)

*Menindee Lakes can be surcharged to 2 015 GL

**Menindee Lakes are now under New South Wales control



MENINDEE LAKES

Under the Murray-Darling Basin Agreement, the Murray-Darling Basin Authority controls the Menindee Lakes until the storage decreases to 480 GL. The New South Wales Government assumes control of the storage at 480 GL and maintains control until the volume in storage exceeds 640 GL. On 18 February 2014, the volume in the Menindee Lakes decreased to below 480 GL and the control switched to the New South Wales Government.

RAINFALL AND TEMPERATURE OUTLOOK

The latest Bureau of Meteorology weather outlook for May to July 2014 indicates a roughly equal chance of a wetter or drier than normal season for the majority of southern and eastern Australia. The chances of warmer or cooler daytime temperatures are also roughly equal.

Climate influences include a warming tropical Pacific Ocean and a warm Indian Ocean.

It is now likely (greater than 70% chance) that an El Niño will develop during winter. El Niño–Southern Oscillation (ENSO) is currently neutral, however ocean temperatures have warmed considerably. El Niño is often, but not always, associated with below-normal rainfall across large parts of southern and inland eastern Australia during the second half of the year.

WATER ALLOCATION OUTLOOK

South Australia will receive its full Entitlement Flow of 1 850 GL in 2014-15. Advice on water allocations will be provided in the near future.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA'S STORAGE RIGHT

On 1 May 2014, South Australia had deferred 30 GL of its Entitlement Flow into storage to meet critical human water needs use in future dry years and 20 GL for private carryover use in future dry years. The volume of deferred water held in the upstream storages is adjusted for net evaporation losses until it is delivered to South Australia. South Australia is not proposing to defer any of its Entitlement Flow during the lower Entitlement Flow months (May to August) due to the risk of spill from Lake Victoria as a result of recent rainfall and water level limits related to the works on the outlet regulator.

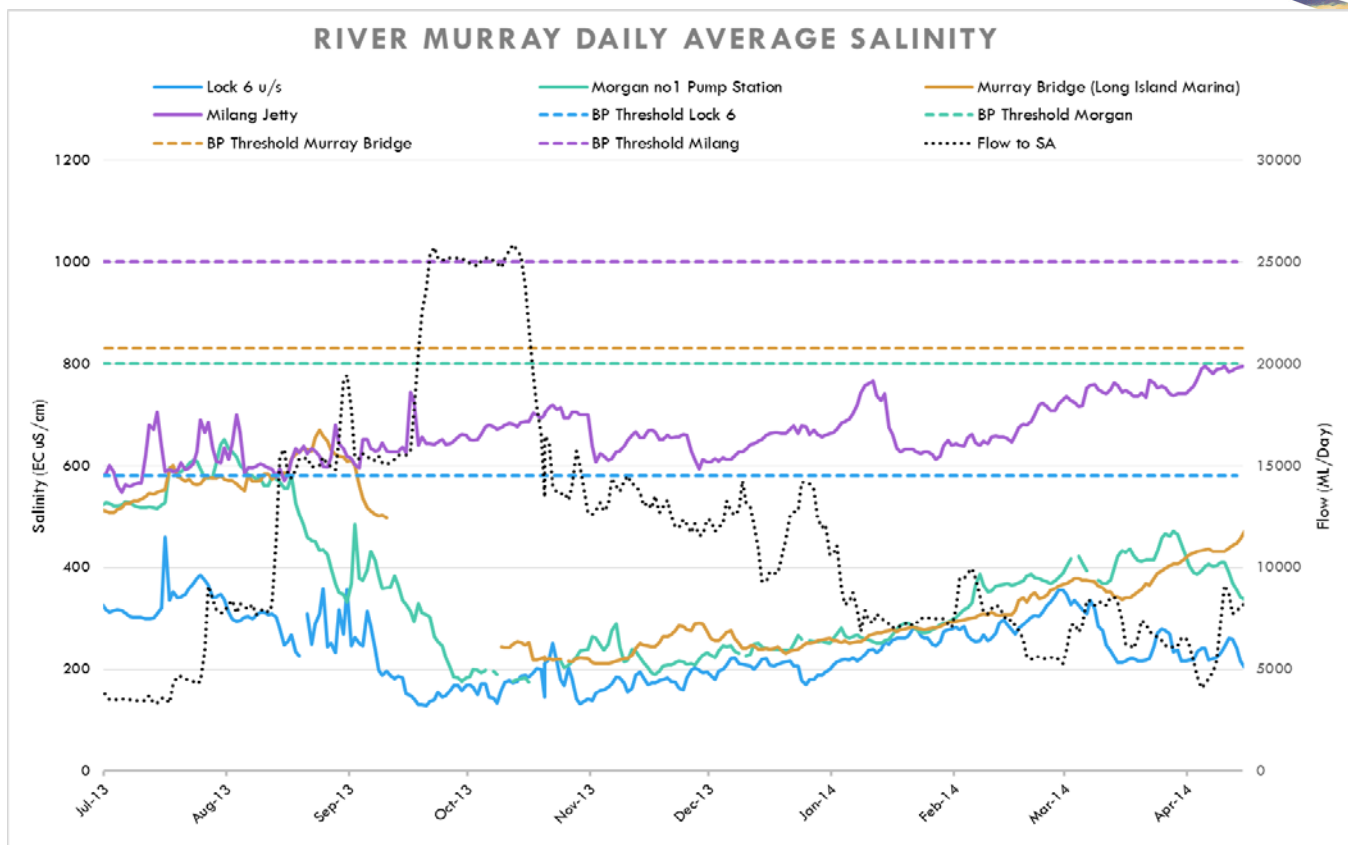
DEWNR is currently investigating opportunities to defer part of South Australia's Entitlement Flow in 2014-15.

WATER QUALITY - Salinity

A number of targets are identified under the Basin Plan, which all Basin States must have regard to in managing River Murray flows. The targets for real-time salinity are identified below. Salinity must not exceed these values for 95 per cent of the time:

- 580 EC at Lock 6
- 800 EC at Morgan
- 830 EC at Murray Bridge
- 1 000 EC at Milang

The following graph shows the salinity at these locations and the flow to South Australia from July 2013 to April 2014. The dashed-lines identify the Basin Plan thresholds for the corresponding colour coded location. It confirms that salinity has not exceeded the threshold at any of these four locations during this period.



Note: Data gaps are due to technical monitoring issues experienced at the site

FLOW OUTLOOK

The flow at the South Australian border is approximately 3 700 ML/day and will remain at this rate during the coming week, depending on upstream river and storage operations, extractions, and rainfall events. The flow comprises the normal May Entitlement Flow of 3 000 ML/day, plus environmental water from the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder.

Construction works at the Lake Victoria outlet regulator are ongoing until July 2014. These works are restricting the outlet capacity. DEWNR is working closely with the Murray-Darling Basin Authority and SA Water to manage the flow to South Australia during this time to avoid any shortfalls in the delivery of the State’s Entitlement Flow.

The flow over Lock 1 is approximately 3 000 ML/day and will remain at this rate during the coming week, depending on weather conditions and extractions.

It is important to note that flow forecasts in this advice are based on the information available at the time of preparation. They may change as new gauging information becomes available, or due to rainfall events or changed operations upstream. Flow forecasts are dependent on predictions made by the Bureau of Meteorology, Murray-Darling Basin Authority and water management agencies in upstream jurisdictions. They will be revised as new information becomes available.

BARRAGE OPERATIONS AND WATER LEVELS IN THE LOWER LAKES

The water level in Lake Alexandrina is approximately 0.66 m AHD and approximately 0.68 m AHD in Lake Albert. The volume of water in the Lower Lakes is being managed to maximise water availability for continuous barrage releases during autumn. Barrage releases are being prioritised through Tauwitchere and Goolwa. All fishways are in operation. SA Water will continue to operate the barrages to minimise any negative salinity impacts from reverse flow events.

To see live salinity data at various locations on the River Murray and in the Lower Lakes, please refer to the following website: <http://www.waterconnect.sa.gov.au/Systems/RTWD/SitePages/Home.aspx>

Water levels and barrage operations are monitored closely by various agencies of the South Australian Government, Murray-Darling Basin Authority and Commonwealth Environmental Water Office.

WATER QUALITY – Blue-Green Algae

The New South Wales Government (through Regional Algal Coordinating Committees) has issued red alert warnings for toxic blue-green algae at:

- Menindee Lakes and the Great Darling Anabranch at, and upstream of, Tara Downs, where the water is unsuitable for stock and domestic, irrigation and recreational purposes;
- Griffith and Balranald on the Murrumbidgee River, where the water is unsuitable for recreational and stock watering purposes; and
- downstream of Barren Box Swamp on the Murrumbidgee River, where the water is unsuitable for irrigation, stock and domestic purposes.

Although these toxic blue-green algal blooms pose no threat to South Australia at this stage, the Murray-Darling Basin Authority and the relevant South Australian Government agencies are regularly monitoring the situation. It is not uncommon to experience algal blooms at this time of the year.

NAVIGATION ISSUES

Sandbars in the vicinity of the Murray Mouth may cause navigation hazards. Mariners are advised to navigate with caution when operating in the area. Sandbars are also present along sections of the River Murray, downstream of Lock 7 and 8 and in South Australia. All watercraft users should be aware of submerged navigation hazards, and should regularly check the river depth.

CONSTRUCTION WORKS

Goolwa Barrage Lock

Remedial works are scheduled to commence on the Goolwa Barrage Lock Chamber on 19 May 2014 and expected to be completed by mid-June 2014. The works are important for the longevity of the structure. During the work period, the Lock will be closed to navigation. Vessels may still be launched directly into the Coorong via:

- Beacon 19 Boat Ramp (downstream of Goolwa);
- Mundoo Boat Ramp; and
- Tauwitchere Lock.

Swan Reach River Vessel Waste Disposal Station

Upgrade works commenced on the Swan Reach River Vessel Waste Disposal Station on 1 May 2014. The works will take about two months to complete. A temporary waste pumping service will be provided by Swan Reach Septic Pumping and Maintenance. The phone number and details of the service will be available at the station and advertised in the local media.

Lock 4

Remedial works at Lock 4 commenced on 5 May 2014 and are expected to be completed by early August 2014. The works are necessary to improve the structural integrity of the Lock chamber. During this period Lock 4 will be closed to navigation.

Mullaroo Creek

Remedial works in the Mullaroo Creek (located in Victoria and flows into the Lindsay River, which enters the River Murray between Lock 6 and 7) are expected to be completed around the end of July 2014. The works are necessary to improve the control of flows in this system. For public safety reasons, the Mullaroo Creek will be closed to navigation at the work site during the construction period.

Chowilla

Construction of the Chowilla Creek Environmental Regulator and associated structures is ongoing. For public safety reasons, the Chowilla Creek remains closed to navigation at the construction site. Works are also underway to upgrade the weirs on Pipeclay Creek and Slaney Creek to improve the management of flows into the Chowilla anabranch and to enable fish passage. The weirs are closed to boat traffic during this construction program.

Lake Victoria Outlet Regulator

Remedial works on the Lake Victoria Outlet Regulator are underway and expected to be completed around the end of July 2014. The works are necessary to improve the structural integrity of the regulator.

Camping is not allowed in the area immediately downstream of the regulator during the construction period. There are alternate camping sites nearby, along Rufus River.

Lock 11

Pre-works for the installation of mechanised gates at Lock 11 (Mildura weir pool) are scheduled to commence in mid-June and will take approximately one week. Installation of the mechanised gates will commence in mid-July and is expected to be completed in mid-August 2014. During this period Lock 11 will be closed to navigation.



Hogwash South Wetland

Lignum following delivery of environmental water
from the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder

Photo by Callie Nickolai

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RIVER MURRAY WATER LEVELS

Below is a table of River Murray water levels at a number of locations from Lock 10 (near Wentworth) to Murray Bridge.

River Murray Water Levels on 14 May 2014

Location	River km	Normal Pool Level	Current Level (m AHD)	1974 Flood Level (m AHD)	1993 Flood Level (m AHD)
Lock 10	825.0	30.80	30.90	33.81	33.32
Lock 9 Kulnine	764.8	27.40	27.51	30.03	29.44
Lock 8 Wangumma	725.7	24.60	25.12	27.60	27.19
Lock 7 Rufus River	696.6	22.10	22.16	25.70	25.24
Lock 6 Murtho	619.8	19.25	19.34	21.03	20.50
Renmark	567.4	-		18.54	18.04
Lock 5	562.4	16.30	16.39	18.07	17.50
Lyrup	537.8	-	13.23	16.85	16.26
Berri	525.9	-	13.23	15.81	15.74
Lock 4	516.2	13.20	13.20	15.65	15.08
Loxton	489.9	-	10.11	15.05	14.12
Cobdogla	446.9	-		13.44	12.38
Lock 3	431.4	9.80	9.94	13.16	12.02
Overland Corner	425.9	-	6.49	12.73	11.58
Waikerie	383.6	-	6.54	11.26	10.24
Lock 2	362.1	6.10	6.33	10.28	9.30
Cadell	332.6	-	3.44	9.17	8.08
Morgan	321.7	-	3.41	8.85	7.65
Lock 1 Blanchetown	274.2	3.20	3.36	6.81	5.38
Swan Reach	245.0	0.75	0.52	6.06	4.51
Mannum PS	149.8	0.75	0.63	3.15	1.90
Murray Bridge	115.3	0.75	0.57	2.06	1.26

Note that the above water levels may be affected by local wind conditions.

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FURTHER INFORMATION

The WaterConnect website is South Australia's comprehensive water information portal and can be accessed at: <http://www.waterconnect.sa.gov.au>

Up-to-date River Murray flow and water level information can be accessed at the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources, SA Water and Murray-Darling Basin Authority websites:

<http://www.waterconnect.sa.gov.au/Systems/RTWD/SitePages/Home.aspx>

www.sawater.com.au/SAWater/Environment/TheRiverMurray/River+Murray+Levels.htm

<http://www.mdba.gov.au/river-data/live-river-data>

The Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources has published a series of inundation maps for the River Murray. They are available at: <http://www.waterconnect.sa.gov.au/Systems/RMIM/Pages/default.aspx>

Information on the management of acid drainage water in the Lower River Murray can be accessed online at:

http://www.epa.sa.gov.au/environmental_info/water_quality/acid_sulfate_soils_ass/lower_river_murray_reclaimed_irrigation_area_lmria

Details of river height and rainfall information in the River Murray within Victoria and New South Wales are available at the Bureau of Meteorology website: <http://www.bom.gov.au/vic/flood>

Information provided by the Commonwealth Environmental Water Office can be accessed at:

www.environment.gov.au/ewater/southern/murray/lower-murray.html

Information on The Living Murray can be accessed at:

<http://www.mdba.gov.au/about-basin/environmental-sites>

Information is also available from the SA Water Hotline on **08 8595 2299**

Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources

<http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/Home>

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