

RIVER MURRAY FLOW REPORT

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Report #49/2014

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This supersedes the previous flow report issued by the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources (DEWNR) on 28 November 2014. The next flow report will be provided on Friday, 12 December 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.

FLOW OUTLOOK

The flow at the South Australian border is approximately 7.7 GL/day and will increase to around 8.0 GL/day during the coming week, depending on upstream river and storage operations, extractions, and rainfall events. The flow comprises the normal December Entitlement Flow of 7 GL/day plus environmental water from the Murray-Darling Basin Authority's *The Living Murray* and Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder. The environmental water is being delivered to provide in-channel and Lower Lakes environmental benefits and assist in maintaining an open Murray Mouth. South Australia is working with the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder to seek further opportunities to deliver environmental water during summer.

The flow over Lock 1 is approximately 6.5 GL/day and will reduce to around 5.8 GL/day 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.

MANAGEMENT OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA'S DEFERRED WATER

The Murray-Darling Basin Authority advised that on 1 December 2014, South Australia had 42.8 GL of water deferred and stored in Dartmouth (29.5 GL for critical human water needs and 13.3 GL for private carryover use in future dry years). Volumes stored are adjusted for net evaporation losses until delivered to South Australia.

DEWNR is investigating opportunities to defer additional Entitlement Flow during 2014-15 given the latest dry climate outlook provided by the Bureau of Meteorology.

MURRAY MOUTH

Any boats navigating through the Murray Mouth region should proceed with caution due to sandbars being present at shallow depth. Boats equipped with 'echo sounders' are strongly encouraged to regularly check depths.

A continuous flow of at least 2 GL/day is required from the barrages to minimise sand build-up in the Murray Mouth. Flows of this magnitude reduce the rate that sand is deposited in the Murray Mouth through tidal activity, wave energy, and storms. Without unregulated flow or large volumes of environmental water, South Australia does not receive enough Entitlement Flow to maintain barrage releases of 2 GL/day during January, February and March each year.

Periods of low River Murray flow have presented management challenges in the past and resulted in continuous dredging operations from 2002 to 2010. The physical condition and openness of the Murray Mouth has deteriorated rapidly since early 2014. The extended duration of unregulated flow conditions ceased in October 2013, which meant less water was available for barrage releases and barrage flows fell below 2 GL/day on occasions.



Recent monitoring of Murray Mouth sand volume and bathymetry (a measurement of depth) confirms that the condition of the Mouth is approaching that experienced in 2002 when dredging was commenced. DEWNR, SA Water and the Murray-Darling Basin Authority are planning and seeking approvals to commence dredging.

WEIR POOL OPERATIONS

On 3 November 2014, water levels in the Lock 1 and 2 weir pools reached the target water level of 0.2 m above the normal operating range (0.5 m above full supply level). The water levels were raised to mimic historic natural water level variability to promote a range of ecological benefits. Environmental water was used for the operation. The outcomes of the weir pool raising are being monitored and will be assessed.

The water level at Lock 1 has been returned to normal pool level. The water level at Lock 2 is being drawn-down and should be around normal pool level next week.

All water users should be aware of the potential impacts of changing water levels, including on pumping infrastructure and boats. Moored boats will need to be checked regularly and mooring ropes adjusted to compensate for lowering water levels.

If you would like to be kept informed on how the project is tracking, please send your name, address and email details to: RiverineRecovery@sa.gov.au

Alternatively, you may call the Contact Officer, Ms Wendy Georganas on (08) 8463 3918.

CHOWILLA OPERATIONS

Water levels at the Chowilla regulator and Lock 6 have returned to normal following the successful testing of the new environmental water management infrastructure on the Chowilla Floodplain.

From Saturday 6 December 2014, Chowilla Creek will be open for small vessel navigation.

There is potential for salinity in the River Murray channel to increase slightly following the draw-down phase of the Chowilla testing. Water quality monitoring will identify any issues should they arise.

Environmental water from *The Living Murray* has been delivered to enable the testing at Chowilla. More information can be found at: www.environment.sa.gov.au/chowilla-floodplain

BARRAGE OPERATIONS AND WATER LEVELS IN THE LOWER LAKES

The water level in Lake Alexandrina is approximately 0.70 m AHD and approximately 0.69 m AHD in Lake Albert. When conditions are favourable, barrage releases will be prioritised through Tauwitschere and Goolwa (approximately 70:30 ratio), adjacent to the fishways, targeting a volume of approximately 2 GL/day. SA Water will continue to operate the barrages to minimise any negative salinity impacts from reverse flow events. All fishways are operating.

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.

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 the risk of submerged navigation hazards, and should regularly check river depth.

WATER TRADE

On 28 October 2014, the Murray-Darling Basin Authority announced that trade from above the Barmah Choke to below the Barmah Choke (downstream trades) will be restricted immediately. A downstream trade can only occur if an upstream trade of the same or greater volume has already occurred. Entitlement holders can still trade upstream. The restriction is necessary because of:

- current and forecast dry conditions;
- high demand for water use due to dry conditions;
- ability to protect delivery of existing water Entitlements (downstream of Barmah Choke); and
- inability to deliver water from Menindee Lakes.

CONSTRUCTION WORKS

Yatco Lagoon

Work is underway to relocate pump offtakes from Yatco Lagoon and install new pump offtakes on the River Murray. The construction work is expected to be completed by early 2015.

Deep Creek (Pike Floodplain)

Work to replace the Deep Creek inlet structure and construct a vertical slot fishway is expected to be completed next week.

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 3 December 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	30.85	33.81	33.32
Lock 9 Kulnine	764.8	27.40	27.59	30.03	29.44
Lock 8 Wangumma	725.7	24.60	24.91	27.60	27.19
Lock 7 Rufus River	696.6	22.10	22.18	25.70	25.24
Lock 6 Murtho	619.8	19.25	19.26	21.03	20.50
Renmark	567.4	-	-	18.54	18.04
Lock 5	562.4	16.30	16.38	18.07	17.50
Lyrup	537.8	-	13.31	16.85	16.26
Berri	525.9	-	13.26	15.81	15.74
Lock 4	516.2	13.20	13.21	15.65	15.08
Loxton	489.9	-	10.16	15.05	14.12
Cobdogla	446.9	-	9.89	13.44	12.38
Lock 3	431.4	9.80	9.82	13.16	12.02
Overland Corner	425.9	-	6.36	12.73	11.58
Waikerie	383.6	-	6.36	11.26	10.24
Lock 2	362.1	6.10	6.24	10.28	9.30
Cadell	332.6	-	3.30	9.17	8.08
Morgan	321.7	-	3.22	8.85	7.65
Lock 1 Blanchetown	274.2	3.20	3.20	6.81	5.38
Swan Reach	245.0	0.75	0.70	6.06	4.51
Mannum PS	149.8	0.75	0.67	3.15	1.90
Murray Bridge	115.3	0.75	0.64	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>

Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources

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

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