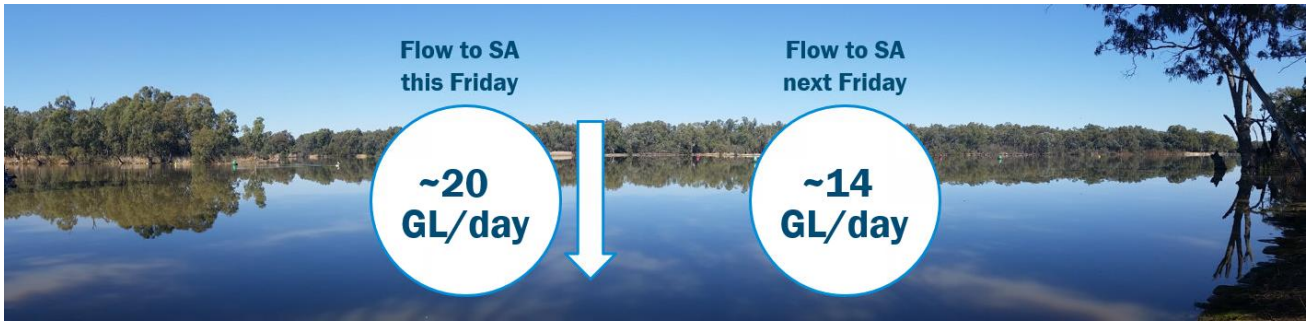
SA River Murray Flow Report

Government of South Australia
Department for Environment and Water

Report #5/2024
Issued 1.30pm 2 February 2024

This supersedes the previous Flow Report issued by the Department for Environment and Water (DEW) on 26 January 2024. The next Flow Report will be provided on Friday 9 February 2024.

Flow outlook



Flow outlook at the SA border for the coming week

The flow at the South Australian border is approximately 20 GL/day and will decrease to around 14 GL/day over the coming week **depending on river operations**.

The current flow at the border comprises the full February Entitlement Flow (6.9 GL/day) plus unregulated flow, water for the environment and interstate trade adjustments.

The flow over Lock 1 is approximately 18 GL/day and will decrease to around 15 GL/day over the coming week.

It is important to note that flow forecasts in this advice are based on the information available at the time of preparation. Advice may change as new gauging information becomes available or due to rainfall events or changed operations upstream.

Water levels

Current water levels are updated daily and can be found on WaterConnect.

Upstream flows

Floodwaters from the severe weather event in early January 2024 which caused flooding in some Victorian tributaries are currently passing through the South Australian River Murray, and are contributing to the increased flow and small river level rises currently being observed. Flow and river levels in SA are not expected to trigger a high flow advice or exceed minor flood levels and will start reducing over the coming week.

This past week, heavy rainfall in excess of 100mm has occurred in the border river catchments of the northern Murray-Darling Basin in south-east Queensland and northern New South Wales, prompting flood warnings to be issued for locations along the Condamine and Moonie Rivers in Queensland, and the Paroo River in New South Wales. Floodwaters from this event will flow into the Darling River and will be (at least) partially captured by the Menindee Lakes storage in western New South Wales, which is currently at 62%. Given that the higher flows are localised to parts of the northern Murray-Darling Basin, it is expected that flow peaks from this event will significantly reduce and flatten out as water moves through the river system prior to reaching Menindee Lakes and the South Australian border.

The Department for Environment and Water will monitor river levels as a result of this recent rainfall, however, it is too early to predict if or how it is likely affect the River Murray in South Australia.

There is currently potential for further rainfall events across the northern part of the Basin, with rain in central New South Wales forecast over the coming week. The department will continue to monitor the situation and any other future events and provide regular information on river flows to South Australian communities.

The Bureau of Meteorology is responsible for issuing flood warnings and advice for the River Murray in New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia (excluding the Lower Lakes). Please refer to the Bureau of Meteorology website for up-to-date information on flood conditions and current warnings for South Australia.

More information on upstream conditions and forecasts can be found in the Murray-Darling Basin Authority's *Weekly Flow Report*.

Murray Mouth

Dredging operations at the Murray Mouth resumed on 27 November 2023 after a break of just over a year due to high flows scouring sand out of the mouth. Dredging is undertaken to maintain connectivity (exchange of water) between the Coorong and the Southern Ocean. Since the 2022-23 flood, dredging has been undertaken with a single dredge of greater capacity than the two smaller dredges that were in use previously.

Barrage releases, combined with dredging, help to maintain flow connectivity of the River Murray Channel to the Murray Mouth and assists in exporting salt from the river system.

Exclusion Zones established around the dredging operations are in place to ensure public safety. Refer to Notice to Mariners No 61 of 2023.

Barrage operations and water levels in the Lower Lakes

The water level in Lake Alexandrina is approximately 0.78 m AHD and Lake Albert is approximately 0.70 m AHD.

The Lower Lakes are being managed to target a daily average lake level between 0.65 m AHD to 0.75 m AHD during February 2024.

During adverse weather conditions, SA Water will operate the barrages to minimise the risk of seawater entering Lake Alexandrina, therefore minimising any negative salinity impacts from reverse flow events.

Gate openings at the barrages can now be viewed on Water Data SA – Barrage dashboard.

Total daily flow releases from the barrages can also be found on Water Data SA – Flows dashboard

River Murray River Vessel Waste Disposal Stations

The Lock 3 River Vessel Waste Disposal Station has been out of commission since January 2020 due to a significant infrastructure failure. The nearest alternative waste facility is located at Waikerie. Normal boat waste (domestic or galley waste) can still be deposited at the Lock 3 facility at the present time.

The Lock 6 River Vessel Waste Disposal Station has an intermittent fault with the flushing water supply that is currently being investigated. The remainder of the station is operating as normal.

You can report any River Vessel Waste Disposal Station issues on 1800 799 065.

If you have any questions, please contact the DEW Engagement Team on DEW.WIOCommunications@sa.gov.au

Lower River Murray levees intermediate remediation funding

The Federal and State Governments have announced $17.1 million in funding to progress intermediate remediation works for government-owned levees in the Lower Murray Reclaimed Irrigation Area (LMRIA) that were damaged in the 2022-23 River Murray flood event.

The intermediate remediation works will bolster the immediate stabilisation works, which began in March 2023 to enable dewatering of inundated agricultural areas and will support the protection of the region's economically significant agricultural land and floodplain infrastructure in the event of future high flows.

In addition to the $17.1 million jointly-funded Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangement funding, the South Australian Government has allocated $14.2 million in state funds for intermediate remediation works to privately-owned LMRIA levees.

Condition assessments of the levees will inform the development of a longer-term resilience strategy for government- and privately-owned levees within the LMRIA. This strategy will also be underpinned by consultation and engagement with the region's relevant stakeholders.

The Department for Environment and Water will continue to work closely with the LMRIA landholders, irrigation trusts and community members in progressing the intermediate remediation works.

Public access to Lower Murray Reclaimed Irrigation Area Levees

All government-owned levee banks along the Lower Murray from Mannum to Wellington continue to remain closed to public access until full condition assessments of the levees are undertaken and levees are deemed safe for public access. Recreational activities along the levee banks, such as walking, cycling and fishing are not allowed.

The government-owned levee banks are Cowirra, Neeta, Wall Flat, Pompoota, Mypolonga, Mobilong, Burdett, Long Flat, Monteith and Jervois.

Privately-owned levees along the Lower Murray are managed and maintained by private landowners and access to their levee banks is at the landholder's discretion. However, access to private levee banks where the department is undertaking reinforcement of levee stabilisation works is not permitted.

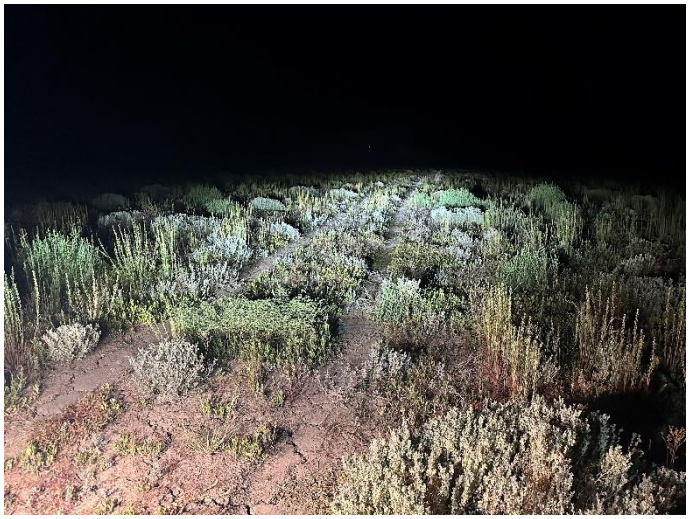
If you have any questions, please contact Lisa van der Linde, Communications and Engagement Officer on 0437 313 087 or Lisa.vanderlinde@sa.gov.au

Environmental news – Nights at Pike

Creatures have been stirring at the Pike Floodplain! Nights have been alive with nocturnal activity this past spring. Eastern barn owls (*Tyto javanica*), tawny frogmouths (*Podargus strigoides*) and common brushtail possums (*Trichosurus vulpecula*) have been spotted across the site.

The recent flood event has provided an abundance of food sources with fresh leaves, flowers and fruits for possums, as well as fish, crustaceans and invertebrates for a range of bird species.

Eastern barn owls have been regularly spotted hunting for small mammals and terrestrial insects over the lush open shrublands and grasslands. The healthy fringing red gum and black box trees along creeks and waterways provide ideal nesting habitat for this hollow dependent species.



Pictures: Nights have been alive at the Pike Floodplain. Photo credit: Sam Walters, DEW.

Water quality

Algal blooms

A number of current alerts for blue-green algae have been issued by upstream authorities. They include:

Murray River at Lock 8 (**Amber alert**)

Murray River at Fort Courage (**Amber alert**)

Murray River at Curlwaa (**Amber alert**)

Darling River at Pomona Boat Ramp (**Amber alert**)

Darling River upstream Pomona (**Amber alert**)

Darling River at Tapio (**Amber alert**)

Darling River at Ellerslie (**Amber alert**)

Darling River at Burtundy (**Amber alert**)

Darling River at Pooncarie (**Amber alert**)

Darling River at Tolarno (**Amber alert**)

Darling River at Menindee Weir 32 (**Amber alert**)

Great Darling Anabranch at Silver City Highway (**Red alert**)

While no algal blooms are currently present within South Australia, people are advised to avoid contact with any obviously green water or scums if they are encountered as they may cause skin irritations in some people.

South Australian authorities closely monitor the situation upstream and SA Water increases sampling whenever a water quality event is detected to allow for timely action. SA Water, SA Health and DEW monitor the occurrence of blue-green algal blooms in South Australia. SA Water uses the water quality data to continually adjust operations to minimise impacts to water treatment plants and other users located along the River Murray.

Water quality alerts in South Australia can be found on the SA Health website – Water Quality Alerts page.

More information on current alerts upstream can be found on the WaterNSW website – Algae Alerts page.

Low dissolved oxygen

Low concentrations of dissolved oxygen are sometimes observed in the River Murray following flood events as a result of floodwaters washing organic matter off the floodplains and into the river. In severe cases, this appears as areas of 'blackwater', and fish and other aquatic animals may become stressed or die.

During recent weeks, low dissolved oxygen levels have been observed in the lower Goulburn River (less than 1 mg/L), and levels are declining at some River Murray locations upstream of the border.

State agencies and the Murray-Darling Basin Authority will continue to monitor the situation. Further advice will be provided if water quality in the River Murray in South Australia is expected to be affected.

Salinity

Salinity levels throughout the River Murray in South Australia are within their typical range. Nonetheless, it is possible that some irrigators may record higher salinity readings at isolated locations. These higher readings are more likely to be observed at the bottom of the water column.

Irrigators are encouraged to monitor the daily salinity levels provided by SA Water as part of their business operations.

Further information

- SA River Murray Flows page - Department for Environment and Water
- 2022-23 River Murray Flood event
- Government of South Australia - State Disaster Recovery
- SA Water quality alerts - SA Health
- Real-time SA water data
- Current SA daily water levels
- Daily flow and water level information at key SA Water sites on the River Murray
- SA daily salinity information
- SA Marine safety
- Real time information - whole of River Murray system
- Whole River Murray System weekly reports
- Flows in the River Murray System including water for the environment
- NSW fish kills
- NSW algal alerts

Bureau of Meteorology

- SA rainfall and river conditions
- Victorian rainfall and river conditions
- NSW rainfall and river conditions
- Climate outlooks
- http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/ahead/outlooks/
- Climate drivers

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