

SA River Murray Flow Report



Report #44/2024

Issued 12:00 pm 1 November 2024

This supersedes the previous Flow Report issued by the Department for Environment and Water (DEW) on 25 October 2024. The next Flow Report will be provided on Friday 8 November 2024.

Flow outlook



The flow at the South Australian border is approximately 15.5 GL/day and is expected to decrease to approximately 14.5 GL/day by next Friday, **depending on river operations**.

The current flow at the South Australian border includes the full November Entitlement Flow (6 GL/day), along with water for the environment, interstate trade adjustments and adjustment for deferred entitlement flows, which are stored and accumulated for critical human water needs during dry periods.

The flow over Lock 1 is currently approximately 16 GL/day, but it is expected to decrease to 14 GL/day by next Friday. 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

Flows at the South Australian border are expected to gradually decrease to around 11 GL/Day until mid-November, before rising to a peak of approximately 15.5 GL/day by the end of the month, driven by environmental water releases from the Goulburn, Campaspe, Broken and Murrumbidgee River systems, noting that flow forecasts may be subject to change dependent on river operations and catchment rainfall.

More information on upstream conditions and forecasts can be found in the [Murray-Darling Basin Authority's Weekly Flow Report](#).

Water for the environment delivery

A low-level operation of the environmental regulator is underway at the Pike Floodplain. The target height of 15.1 m AHD (55 cm above the normal level at the Pike regulator) has now been reached. Raising of Lock 5 is not required to undertake this operation but may be considered if greater water exchange on the floodplain is required. Pumping is about to commence at 2 sites at Pike to water regenerating lignum and black box.

At Katarapko floodplain, a low-level operation is underway and water levels have now been raised behind The Splash regulator to the target of 2.0 metres (to 12.0 m AHD). Similar to Pike, raising of Lock 4 is not required to undertake this operation but may be considered if greater water exchange on the floodplain is required.

Water for the environment is currently being delivered via pumping to 4 sites on the Chowilla Floodplain.

The floodplain environmental watering actions are aimed at supporting the significant improvements in condition and regeneration of trees, lignum and understorey vegetation and providing important habitat for frogs, waterbirds and other fauna. The management of these operations may be adapted depending on River Murray flows, conditions in the River and on the floodplain, and will be informed by the outcomes of environmental monitoring.

Water for the environment continues to be delivered as part of SA's entitlement flow. In addition, water for the environment is now arriving at the border from releases in the Murray and Goulburn rivers as part of the spring pulse. Although the spring pulse will remain in channel, it is expected to support Murray cod breeding, increased river productivity and provide benefits to the lower lakes and Coorong. Similar spring flows in 2019 were followed by a significant Murray Cod recruitment event. Environmental water is expected to continue to be delivered over the next few weeks from releases in the Murray and Murrumbidgee. In the absence of water for the environment, SA would currently be receiving entitlement flow only.

Potential weir pool lowering

Weir pool lowering within the normal operating range at Lock 2 (up to 8 cm below normal pool level) is currently being considered. A minor lowering would aim to achieve a range of benefits for floodplain and wetland vegetation and wildlife, and support Murray Cod and callop breeding. Any lowering would be planned to coincide with increasing flow conditions associated with the arrival of the spring pulse to minimise impact to extractors and navigation while optimising outcomes for fish. All weir pool level manipulation is subject to the availability of water for the environment and necessary approvals.

In stream salinity will be closely monitored ahead of, during and after any lowering event.

As planning progresses, further details on these operations will be provided in future Flow Reports.

Murray Mouth

Dredging operations at the Murray Mouth continue. Dredging is undertaken to maintain connectivity (exchange of water) between the Coorong and the Southern Ocean.

Dredging operations have shifted further into the Tauwiche channel, moving away from the Murray mouth as good progress has been made. This has improved the flow between the Tauwiche and Goolwa channels and the mouth.

Dredging operations may be impacted by severe weather, significant swell and dredge maintenance activities.

Barrage releases, combined with dredging, help to maintain flow connectivity of the River Murray Channel to the Murray Mouth and assist 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 0.83 m AHD and Lake Albert is approximately 0.80 m AHD.

The Lower Lakes are being managed to target a daily average lake level between 0.775 m AHD and 0.875 throughout November.

During adverse weather conditions and high tides, 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. Barrage operations will continue to be undertaken dependent on upstream flows, lake levels and variable weather conditions.

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](#).

Water quality

Algal blooms upstream of SA

Numerous amber alerts for Blue Green Algae remain upstream of the Border. An amber alert indicates that the water should be considered unsuitable for potable use and that the water may be unsuitable for stock watering. Water users should use caution and avoid water where signs of Blue Green Algae are present. Details of the current alert locations can be found on the [WaterNSW website – Algae Alerts page](#).

River Murray 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 hard waste (domestic or galley waste) can still be deposited at the Lock 3 facility at the present time.

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

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

Intermediate remediation of the LMRIA levees project

The Intermediate Remediation of the LMRIA Levees project is jointly funded by the Australian and South Australian governments, through the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements. This project will return the flood damaged sections of government and private levees to their pre-flood height.

Intermediate remediation works update:

- On ground works have been completed at Pompoota and Long Flat.
- On ground works continue to progress at Mypolonga and Wall Flat.
- Preparation work and sheet piling at Burdett and Mobilong is complete.
- The Department for Environment and Water (DEW) is working with the Department for Infrastructure and Transport (DIT), as the state infrastructure agency, on the procurement of contractors to undertake works.
- A request for tender for the remaining 4 government levee banks was issued by DIT in July, with an anticipated award date in early November.
- The procurement for works on private levees and the preparation of associated land access agreements are progressing.
- The first stage of condition assessments for LMRIA levees has been completed with the second stage of further investigations and testing in progress.

Public access to levees

Where intermediate remediation works are required for government levees, they will remain closed until the works are progressively completed and safe access is determined over the next 6-9 months. Any government levee not requiring intermediate remediation work will remain closed pending the outcome of a full condition assessment and a safety risk assessment to ensure they are safe for public access.

The government levee banks are Cowirra, Neeta, Wall Flat, Pompoota, Mypolonga, Mobilong, Burdett, Long Flat, Monteith and Jervois. Access to private levees is at the landholder's discretion, however, access is not permitted where remediation works are being undertaken.

The safety of the public is of paramount importance and DEW will keep the community informed of the project's progress, including when levees may be accessible to the public, through its website and newsletter.

For more information, please visit [Department for Environment and Water – Levees](#)

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

Waterbird Aerial Survey 2024

From the 1st of October to the 29th of November, the Centre for Ecosystem Science at the University of NSW will be conducting the 2024 Eastern Australian Waterbird Survey.

The Eastern Australian Waterbird Survey is one of the largest wildlife surveys in Australia, surveying major wetland sites in the Murray-Darling Basin, providing invaluable information on the ecosystem health of wetlands and rivers. 2024 will be the 42nd year the survey has run.

If you are in the Coorong and Lower Lakes or the Riverland areas on the below dates, keep an eye on the sky, as the survey's single engine Cessna 208 plane will be flying (or have now flown) over:

- 15 October – Southern Coorong / Naracoorte & SE
- 16 October – Naracoorte & SE
- 22 October - Riverland
- 5 to 7 November – Coorong and Lower Lakes and the Riverland

Further information can be found on the aerial survey of waterbirds can be found at:

<https://www.unsw.edu.au/research/ecosystem/our-research/rivers-and-wetlands/eastern-australian-waterbird-survey>

For more information or enquiries, please contact [ecosystemsurvey@gmail.com](mailto:ecosystemssurvey@gmail.com)

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.

New information requirements for Water Trade Forms

The following information is now required in relation to applications to trade or transfer water:

- Strike date (date the price was agreed) must be recorded where requested.
- Reason for trade must be accurately specified.

Furthermore, in accordance with the Water Amendment (Restoring our Rivers) Act 2023, new obligations became mandatory on 1 July 2024 for persons making trade applications to ensure that information is comprehensive and accurate and to keep records regarding reason for trade and trade price for a minimum of five years. For more information, please visit the [Australian Government Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water website](#) and see the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) developed by the Inspector-General of Water Compliance.

Have your say on potential infrastructure upgrades at Bruno Bay

The Department for Environment and Water (DEW), in partnership with Berri Barmera Council, has identified Bruno Bay for potential infrastructure upgrades.

Potential upgrades will improve environmental outcomes while also enhancing community use of recreational areas and improving access for water managers and landholders during periods of higher flows (up to 80 gigalitres per day).

Potential upgrades include:

- Raising the Bruno Bay road and carpark
- New toilets, shelters and barbeques
- New boat ramp.

These investigations are part of DEW's South Australian Constraints Measures project, which seeks to remove barriers to the delivering of water for the environment to benefit the health of the River Murray floodplains, wetlands and end of system.

Community drop-in session

You're invited to come along to discuss the potential upgrades and provide feedback, so that we can ensure any proposed works move forward with the support of the community.

When: Wednesday 13 November 3pm - 6pm

Where: Soldiers Memorial Institute Cnr Shueard St and McLeod St Cobdogla

For more information and to subscribe for updates, email SAConstraints@sa.gov.au or visit environment.sa.gov.au/constraints

Environmental news – Australasian bittern

Keep your ears peeled for bunyips along the SA River Murray this spring. It could be the call of an endangered Australasian bittern. They are difficult to spot due to their cryptic nature and preference for dense reedbed habitat. Thus, bitterns are more often detected by the distinctive booming calls of territorial males during breeding season (Oct-Feb).

We think we heard one in spring of 2023 in the Murtho area, which would be the first recording of the species in the upper SA Murray since 2017. They are more frequently detected in the Lower Lakes and Coorong.

Loss of wetland habitat, changing water regimes and introduced predators are some of the threats faced by this species. In an attempt to confirm the Australasian bittern's presence, audio recorders will be utilised in the field. In the meantime, we would love to know if you think you have heard one calling.



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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](#)
- [Water for the environment actions in the Murray-Darling basin catchments](#)
- [NSW algal alerts](#)

Bureau of Meteorology

- [SA rainfall and river conditions](#)
- [Victorian rainfall and river conditions](#)
- [NSW rainfall and river conditions](#)
- [Climate outlooks](#)
- [Climate drivers](#)

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