

SA River Murray Flow Report



Report #51/2024

Issued 12:00 pm 20 December 2024

This supersedes the previous Flow Report issued by the Department for Environment and Water (DEW) on 13 December 2024. The next Flow Report will be provided on Friday 27 December 2024.

Flow outlook



The flow at the South Australian border is approximately 8 GL/day and is expected to decrease to approximately 8 GL/day by next Friday, **depending on river operations**.

The current flow at the South Australian border includes the full December Entitlement Flow (7 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 current flow over Lock 1 is approximately 7 GL/day, but it is expected to decrease to 6.5 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

In December, flows at the South Australian border are expected to continue to decrease as environmental water releases throughout the system continue to decline. Flow forecasts remain subject to change, depending 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

The draw down of the operation of the environmental regulators at the Pike and Katarapko Floodplains is now complete with the water level back to the normal operating level. Pumping is continuing at one site higher on the floodplain at Pike to water regenerating lignum and black box and to provide habitat for birds and frogs.

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

The floodplain environmental watering actions were aimed at supporting the significant post flood improvements in condition and regeneration of trees, lignum and understorey vegetation and providing important habitat for frogs, waterbirds and other fauna.

Water for the environment continues to be delivered as part of SA's Entitlement flow. The tail of the spring pulse is being delivered at the border from releases in the Murray and the Murrumbidgee rivers. Monitoring of fish and other ecological responses to the spring pulse is continuing. Over the remainder of December and January, approximately 1GL/day of water for the environment will

be delivered to SA. This water will support the maintenance of levels in the Lower Lakes and barrages and/or fishways releases to the Coorong over summer. In the absence of water for the environment, SA would currently be receiving Entitlement flow only (7,000 ML/day in December).

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 continued on the Tauwichee channel. After completing a cut in the Goolwa channel late last week, operations are working their way into 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

As of 19 December 2024, the water level in Lake Alexandrina is approximately 0.80m AHD and Lake Albert is approximately 0.74m AHD.

The Lower Lakes are being managed to target a daily average lake level between 0.75m AHD and 0.85m AHD throughout December.

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

WaterNSW have issued red alerts for blue-green algae (BGA) along the Darling-Baaka at Wilcannia, Caulpaulin, Lake Menindee outlet, and in the Lower Darling (Baaka) at Pooncarie and Ellerslie. Amber and green alerts are in place across the remainder of the Menindee Lakes and the Lower Darling (Baaka).

In the Murray River, numerous amber and green BGA alerts are in effect from Hume Dam to the South Australian border, including an amber alert for Lake Hume. The Edward-Wakool system also has several amber and green alerts. Goulburn-Murray Water has issued a BGA warning for Lake Eildon.

A red alert from WaterNSW indicates a toxic algal bloom, making the water dangerous for humans and animals. An amber alert signifies that the water is unsuitable for drinking and may be unsafe for stock watering. Water users should exercise caution and avoid areas where signs of blue-green algae are visible.

At the time of publishing, there are **no BGA alerts in South Australia**.

Details of the current NSW 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

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.

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 remediation works have been completed at Pompoota and Long Flat.
- The substantive on-ground works are scheduled to be completed at Mypolonga and Wall Flat by the Christmas-New Year break, with any final project close-out activities due to be completed in January 2025.
- Site preparations including sheet piling have been completed at Burdett, Mobilong, and Cowirra.
- The Department for Infrastructure and Transport (DIT), is in the final stages of awarding the tender for the remaining 4 government levees (Burdett, Mobilong, Cowirra, Neeta) and on-ground works are scheduled to commence in January 2025.
- The procurement for works on private levees and the preparation of associated land access agreements with landholders are progressing.
- The results of the on-ground geotechnical investigations are being analysed with draft reports expected to be provided to the department shortly.

Government levees in the LMRIA are temporarily closed to the public.

Where intermediate remediation works are required for government levees, they will remain temporarily closed until the works are progressively completed and safe access is determined, which is likely to be mid-2025. Any government levee not requiring intermediate remediation work will remain temporarily 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.

Recreational activities

Recreational activities are not permitted on the levees while they are closed, including:

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

Environmental News – Wetland pumping at Pike floodplain

Recently, DEW worked with the Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board and the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder to pump water for the environment to Mundic Wetland and the Tanyaca Horseshoe floodplain on the Pike floodplain.

These sites sit at high elevation on the floodplain and could not be watered by the operation of the Pike environmental regulator.

It is expected that the recent watering will support young black box seedlings and lignum that regenerated after the natural floods.

Emus, Grey Teal and Shelducks were amongst the first to check out the water spreading out on the Tanyaca Horseshoe floodplain, while Southern Bell Frogs (a threatened species) were heard calling from Mundic Wetland within a week of the pumping starting.



Left to right, clockwise: Picture 1: Grey Teal at Tanyaca Horseshoe floodplain. Photo credit: DEW. Picture 2: Water spreading across the Tanyaca Horseshoe floodplain depression. Photo credit: Millewa Pumping. Picture 3: Tanyaca Horseshoe pumping commences. Photo credit: DEW. Picture 4: Mundic wetland during watering. Photo credit: DEW.

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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