



River Murray Water Resources Report

Issue 38: 15 May 2009

Observations at a glance

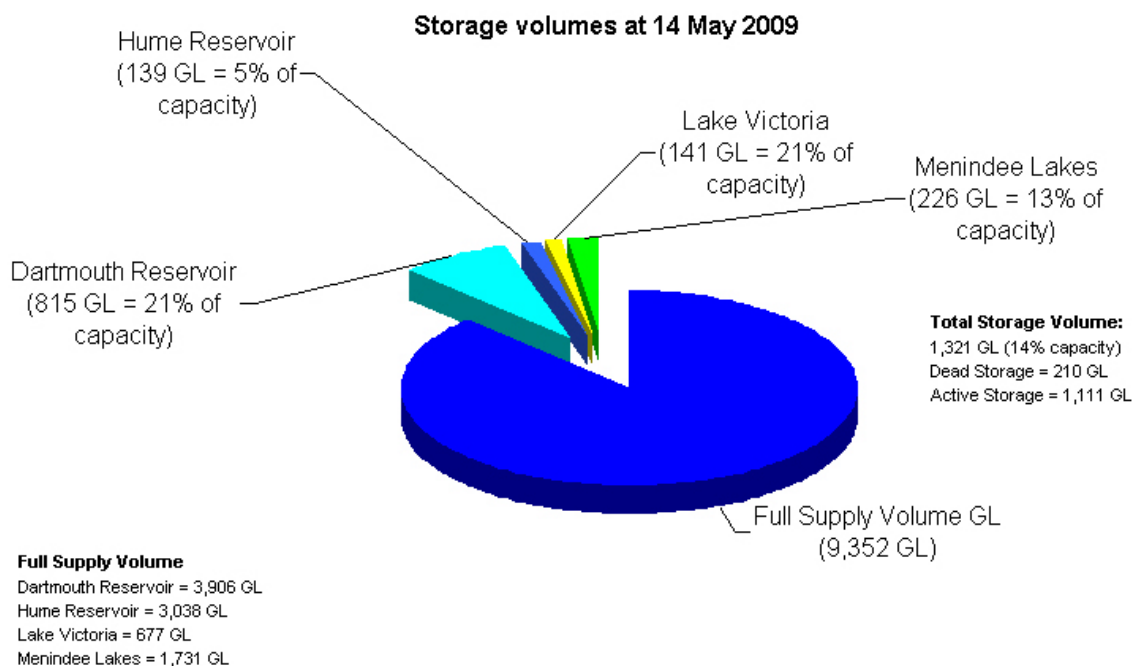
- Minister for the River Murray, Karlene Maywald, has announced irrigators are likely to begin the new water year on 1 July 2009 with an opening allocation of at least 2% and access to at least 50% of eligible carryover.
- River Murray irrigation allocations in South Australia will remain at 18% for the remainder of 2008-09 as extreme drought conditions continue across the Murray-Darling Basin.
- The volume of water in upstream storages is currently 1,321 GL (14% capacity), compared to the long-term mid-May average of about 5,110 GL (54% capacity).
- Just 50 GL of inflows were recorded in April 2009, well below the long-term April average of 240 GL.

Murray-Darling Basin storages

The volume of water in storage in Hume and Dartmouth Reservoirs, Lake Victoria and Menindee Lakes is currently 1,321 GL (14% capacity), compared to about 1,770 GL (19% capacity) at the same time last year. The long-term average for mid-May is 5,110 GL (54% capacity).

Of this 1,321 GL there is about 210 GL of "dead storage" that cannot be accessed without pumping. Most of the remaining water is already allocated for both critical human needs and carry-over in 2009-10. Current storage levels are shown in **Figure 1**.

Figure 1: Murray-Darling Basin storages



Rainfall and River Murray inflows

River Murray system inflows improved during April 2009 to 50 GL, slightly higher than the 30 GL used as a worst-case inflow figure for planning purposes. While the improvement is welcome the River Murray system remains in serious drought with inflows and storage levels remaining at historically low levels. **Table 1** outlines the year to date inflows compared to previous years, the long-term average and the past 10 years.

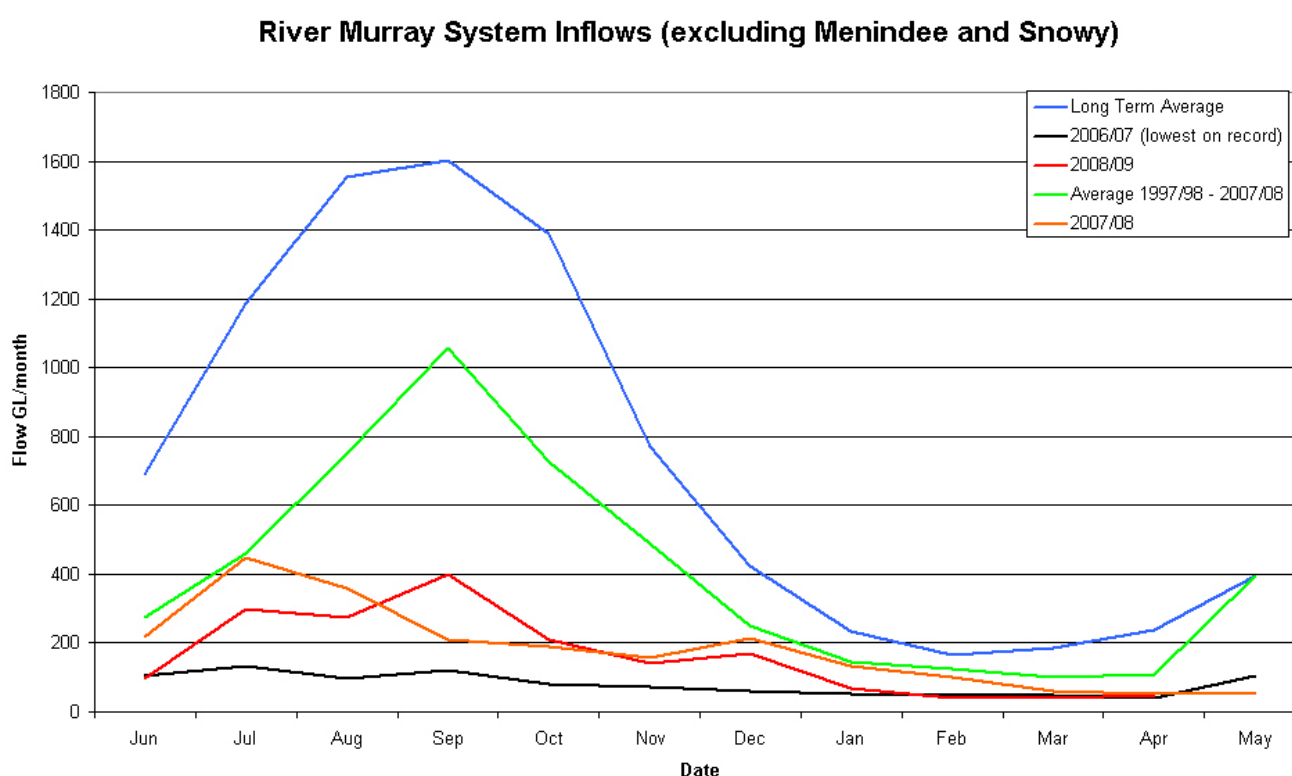
Table 1: Inflow comparisons

| | 2008-09 | 2007-08 | 2006-07 | Long-Term Average | Past 10 Years |
|--------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|-------------------|---------------|
| Inflows June-April (GL) | 1,780 | 2,140 | 870 | 8,440 | 4,490 |

Recent rainfall also helped to reduce storage and transmission losses that had remained at high levels since January. This will increase inflows during May 2009.

Figure 2 shows the monthly River Murray inflows.

Figure 2: River Murray system inflows (excluding Menindee and Snowy)



River operations

The flow to South Australia has been reduced to 1,900 ML/day to conserve water for carry-over into 2009-10. This is necessary because of the poor outlook for River Murray system inflows. This flow is allowing for 1,100-1,200 ML/day flow over Lock 1.

At the same time last year, the flow to South Australia averaged just 1,600 ML/day and the flow past Lock 1 was about 1,000 ML/day.

Salinity and water levels

Salinity levels above Lock 1 remain fairly low. However, downstream of Lock 1 salinity levels remain high due to low water levels. Salinity in Lake Alexandrina (at Milang) is currently 5,919 EC compared to about 4,170 EC at the same time last year. Salinity in Lake Albert (at Meningie) is currently 7,522 EC.

Lower Lakes water levels have increased due to recent rainfall in the area. In Lake Alexandrina the water level is currently about minus 1m AHD, and in Lake Albert it is about minus 0.35m AHD.

Table 2 shows the current water levels and salinity at selected locations.

Table 2: Water and salinity levels

| | Actual Water Levels at 15/05/09 | | Full Supply Level Level | Variation from Pool Level | Current EC Level |
|---|---------------------------------|-----------|-------------------------|---------------------------|------------------|
| | U/S m AHD | D/S m AHD | U/S of Weir m AHD | U/S of Weir m AHD | |
| Lock 6 | 19.18 | 16.21 | 19.25 | -0.07 | 223 |
| Lock 5 | 16.28 | 13.22 | 16.30 | -0.02 | 225 |
| Lock 4 | 13.19 | 9.97 | 13.20 | -0.01 | 277 |
| Lock 3 | 9.77 | 6.17 | 9.80 | 0.03 | 342 |
| Lock 2 | 6.10 | 3.28 | 6.10 | 0.00 | 426 |
| Lock 1 | 3.23 | -0.75 | 3.20 | 0.03 | 475 |
| Lake Alexandrina (Milang) | -1.08 | | | | 5,919 |
| Lake Albert (Meningie) | -0.35 | | | | 7,522 |
| Goolwa | -1.05 | | | | 27,747 |
| Water levels below Lock 1 are affected by wind and will vary throughout the day | | | | | |
| EC Readings below Lock 1 are daily averages and will vary throughout the day | | | | | |

Water allocations in South Australia and interstate

Minister for the River Murray, Karlene Maywald, today announced that irrigators are likely to begin the new water year on 1 July 2009 with an opening allocation of at least 2% and access to at least 50% of eligible carryover.

River Murray irrigation allocations in South Australia will remain at 18% for the remainder of 2008-09 as extreme drought conditions continue across the Murray-Darling Basin. View the Minister's latest River Murray announcement at www.dwlbc.sa.gov.au/media.html

The latest information about allocations in New South Wales is available at www.naturalresources.nsw.gov.au/mediarelnr/mr_toc_currn.html or http://www.dwe.nsw.gov.au/water/avail_alloc.shtml

The latest information about allocations in Victoria is available at www.g-mwater.com.au/news/media-releases/media-releases-2008/

Temporary interstate River Murray water trade deadlines

Irrigators are reminded that applications for water trades to or from New South Wales must be lodged with NSW State Water by 31 May 2009, and trades to or from Victoria must be lodged with the relevant Victorian water authority by 16 June 2009.

Water trade within South Australia

Applications for permanent and temporary trades **within** South Australia to have effect in 2008-09 should also be lodged by **16 June 2009**. This will ensure sufficient time to process the trade by 30 June 2009. Although applications will be accepted after 16 June 2009 it may not be possible to process these applications by 30 June 2009 for use in 2008-09, or carry-over into 2009-10. Trades finalised after 30 June 2009 cannot be retrospective. Licence holders are therefore encouraged to submit trade applications for 2008-09 as early as possible.

Carry-over applications closed

Applications to carry-over irrigation allocations not used in 2008-09 into the 2009-10 water year have now closed. Late applications will not be accepted.

The carry-over policy and further information is available at www.dwlbc.sa.gov.au/murray/drought/index.html#Carryoverwater

Weather outlook

The Bureau of Meteorology's outlook for May to July 2009 shows there is a 40-65% chance of exceeding median rainfall over the Murray-Darling Basin. It also shows there is a 50-55% chance of exceeding median maximum temperatures.

Further information on River Murray conditions and rainfall forecasts can be obtained from the following websites:

Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation www.dwlbc.sa.gov.au

SA Murray-Darling Basin NRM Board www.samdbnrm.sa.gov.au

Murray-Darling Basin Commission www.mdbc.gov.au

SA Water Daily Reports www.riverland.net.au/%7Eheinze/ex-flow-frame.htm

Bureau of Meteorology www.bom.gov.au

Queensland Department of Primary Industry www.longpaddock.qld.gov.au

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