

River Murray Flow Report



Report #44/2020

Issued 10:00 am 30 October 2020

This supersedes the previous flow report issued by the Department for Environment and Water (DEW) on 23 October 2020. The next flow report will be provided on Friday 6 November 2020.

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.

CONSULTATION ON THE DRAFT WATER ALLOCATION PLAN FOR THE RIVER MURRAY PRESCRIBED WATERCOURSE

The Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board is making changes to the River Murray Prescribed Watercourse Water Allocation Plan. The draft plan proposes changes to the way Environmental Land Management Allocations (ELMA) are distributed in the Lower Murray Reclaimed Irrigation Area (LMRIA) and a number of other minor changes including rules related to drilling new wells along the length of the River Murray to minimise potential impacts associated with connected water resources.

The proposed changes will only affect holders of an ELMA (Class 8) licence.

Copies of the draft plan and supplementary material can be viewed on the Boards website at:

<https://landscape.sa.gov.au/mr/water/water-allocation-plans/river-murray-wap>

The landscape board are seeking to consult with the community on the draft plan. Consultation opened on 28 September and will close on 2 December 2020.

Written submissions can be sent to:

Ms R Freshwater, Murraylands & Riverland Landscape Board, Upper Level, Cnr Mann & Walker St, Mount Barker SA 5251

Email: rmwap.feedback@sa.gov.au

Online survey: <https://landscape.sa.gov.au/mr/water/water-allocation-plans/river-murray-wap>

Submissions will be made publically available. If you prefer that your submission remains anonymous then please make sure you that indicate this in your submission.

Submissions close at 5:00 pm on Wednesday, 2 December 2020.

FLOW OUTLOOK

The flow at the South Australian border is approximately 10 GL/day and will remain around 10 GL/day over the coming week. It comprises:

- full October Entitlement Flow (5.5 GL/day);
- plus water for the environment (see below *Environmental News*); and
- interstate trade adjustments.

The flow over Lock 1 is approximately 9 GL/day and will decrease to around 8.5 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.

ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

Water for the environment is being delivered from spring watering actions in the River Murray and Goulburn River. Flows from a recent pulse in the Goulburn have now combined with flows in the Murray as the first part of an Oct-Dec pulse along the entire length of the River Murray referred to as the Southern Spring Flow 2020.

The Southern Spring Flow 2020 will give vegetation and wetlands a drink and provide food and shelter for native fish and other aquatic animals from the mid-Murray to the lower Murray, all the way to the Lower Lakes and Coorong.

Further information on the Southern Spring Flow 2020 including regular updates can be found [here](#).

In South Australia, this water for the environment will help to:

- increase 'flowing water habitat' to benefit native fish, animals and plants in the River Murray channel that have adapted to a riverine environment;
- provide for increased spring barrage releases to the Coorong to support a productive, food-rich environment for fish and birds and promote suitable conditions for estuarine fish to spawn;
- remove excess salt from the River Murray (see more information [here](#))
- maintain healthy water quality, salinity and water levels in the River Murray channel, Lower Lakes and Coorong, including through targeted releases at the barrages when weather conditions are best suited to push water down the Coorong (see more information [here](#));
- maintain good connection from the Coorong to the upstream areas of the River Murray and its tributaries to enable fish migration and movement, including for young-of-year diadromous congolli and common galaxias which will be migrating upstream into Lake Alexandrina from the Coorong; and
- deliver a range of outcomes to wetlands in the Riverland via arrangements with the Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board, Renmark Irrigation Trust and Australian Landscape Trust.

Monitoring from late July to early September 2020 caught 101 pouched and 3 short-headed lamprey migrating through the fishways at the barrages to spawn in the River Murray. The majority have been tagged with Passive Integrated Transponders (PIT tags) so their passage can be detected via receivers along the River Murray. You can track upstream lamprey migration [here](#).



Figure 1: A sunset at Overland Corner which has benefited from environmental water being delivered in 2020 (Annie Kriesl, Landscape SA)



Figure 2: Monitoring has shown that environmental water has provided a great frog response at Overland Corner (Lock 3 reach) in 2020 with several species sampled including the Southern Bell Frog which is listed as vulnerable. A Southern Bell Frog tadpole found at Overland Corner is shown here (before it was quickly returned to the water to grow bigger) (Annie Kriesl, Landscape SA).

MURRAY MOUTH

Dredging operations at the Murray Mouth commenced on 9 January 2015 to maintain connectivity (exchange of water) between the Coorong and the Southern Ocean. At 25 October 2020, a total of approximately 6 504 260 cubic metres of sand had been removed by dredging operations.

Two dredges are operating between the Goolwa and Tauwitchere channels 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Barrage releases combined with dredging have helped to maintain connectivity of the Murray Mouth.

There are a number of shallow zones in and adjacent to the Murray Mouth. Mariners should use caution when traversing the mouth area, follow all directions, reduce speed and avoid travelling at low tide. Mariners equipped with echo sounders should check depths regularly. Navigation through the Murray Mouth is only permitted during daylight hours. Exclusion Zones established around the dredging operations are in place to ensure public safety. Refer to Notice to Mariners No 42 of 2016 [Notice 42](#).

There is a partial park closure in place for the northern tip of the Coorong National Park. For more information visit [Coorong partial park closure notice](#).

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 0.83 m AHD.

Water for the environment has enabled continuous fishway releases and barrage releases to be undertaken during winter and into spring.

During the past week:

- fishways at all the barrages have provided connectivity between the Coorong and the Lower Lakes;
- Tauwitchere had numerous gates open to push fresher water down the Coorong;
- Goolwa, Mundoo and Boundary Creek Barrages had gates open to provide releases to support diadromous fish migration.

As of Tuesday 27 October 2020, the weekly releases were approximately 54 GL.

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.

Water levels and barrage operations are monitored closely by the South Australian Government, Murray-Darling Basin Authority and Commonwealth Environmental Water Office.

RIVER VESSEL WASTE DISPOSAL STATIONS

Loxton

The Loxton River Vessel Waste Disposal Station is currently being upgraded and will be closed until further notice. While it was due to open at the end of October 2020 construction delays have postponed this. A temporary pump-out service is available for river vessel users in this area. To use this service, please until 30 call Mr David Thiselton on 0412 839 392 to arrange a suitable time to pump-out waste. This service is available from Monday to Saturday, 8am to 5pm (please note: 4 hours notice is required for this service).

If you need any other help or advice with regard to this station, please call Mr Hayden Smith on 0457 820 553.

Lock 3

The Lock 3 River Vessel Waste Disposal Station is currently out of commission due to an infrastructure failure. This means that boat operators who need to empty sewage tanks will need to use the nearest alternative waste facility located at Waikerie. Alternatively boat operators who require an urgent pump-out in the Kingston-on-Murray area can contact Mr Hayden Smith on 0457 820 553 for help or advice. Normal boat waste (domestic or galley waste) can still be deposited at the Lock 3 facility at the present time.

FLOODPLAIN OPERATIONS

The following table identifies the normal pool level (NPL) and normal operating range (NOR) for locks and weirs in South Australia. Potential operations could raise the water level above the NPL or NOR at some locks and weirs.

Weir	Normal Pool Level (NPL) (m AHD)	Normal Operating Range (m AHD)
Lock 6 - Murtho	19.25	19.17 - 19.50
Lock 5 - Renmark	16.30	16.13 - 16.43
Lock 4 - Bookpurnong	13.20	13.16 - 13.50
Lock 3 - Overland Corner	9.80	9.77 - 10.02
Lock 2 - Waikerie	6.10	5.90 - 6.40
Lock 1 - Blanchetown	3.20	3.10 - 3.40

First Operation of New Floodplain Infrastructure

The operations of the new Pike and Katarapko floodplain infrastructure and associated weir pool raisings are underway with water levels rising and areas of floodplain receiving welcome inundation. The operations aim to provide a range of environmental benefits to the plants and wildlife on the floodplain.

Updates on operations such as below will continue to be provided in the *River Murray Flow Report*. If you would like to be sent further communications about Pike and Katarapko floodplain operations via email, please provide your details to the Engagement Officer, Ellee Eleftheriadis, at ellee.elftheriadis2@sa.gov.au.

Katarapko Floodplain with Raising Lock 4 Weir Pool

A medium level first operation of the new environmental watering infrastructure on the Katarapko floodplain is underway. The water level at The Splash regulator, as at 28 October 2020 is approximately 12.8 m AHD. This is the maximum water level expected to be reached. The water level in the Lock 4 weir pool is also raised in conjunction with the Katarapko operation up to 0.3 m above NPL (up to 13.5 m AHD). The Katarapko operations and Lock 4 raising will be completed in December 2020.

The event is progressing well with water extending out onto areas of the floodplain providing the lower lying vegetation and trees with water. Waterbirds and frogs are responding to the conditions.

The Katarapko floodplain is part of the Murray River National Park which is currently still open to the general public for visiting. However please be aware of the following closures and updates within the Park:

- The Eckerts Creek entrance has been closed due to inundation over the road;
- A section of the Lock 4 Road has also been closed due to water over the road and road washouts. The closure extends from the intersection to Booky Cliffs until after campsite 14;
- The Ngak Indau Wetland Trail carpark is inaccessible;
- Campsites 1 to 12 are still accessible from Draper and Lock 4 Roads via Berri; and
- Campsites 15 to 55 and the Lock 4 Day Visit area are only accessible from the Katarapko Entrance, Katarapko Crescent via Winkie Road, Winkie.

We ask that all visitors when accessing the park keep an eye out for signage to guide you on your visit as you may notice water on tracks and campsites and closures of some tracks. Conditions within the creeks will vary with changed flows, water depth and water extending onto areas of the floodplain. Care should be taken when driving, boating or canoeing.

Please visit the National Parks SA website for more information relating to access and visiting of Katarapko - https://www.parks.sa.gov.au/find-a-park/Browse_by_region/Murray_River/murray-river-national-park

Pike Floodplain with Raising Lock 5 Weir Pool

A low level first operation of the new environmental watering infrastructure on the Pike floodplain is progressing well with water levels at the Pike regulator at 15.01 m AHD as of 28 October 2020. This operation also involves a further raising of the water level in the Lock 5 weir pool which is currently raised by 0.26 m AHD (within the NOR) above normal pool level (NPL). Further raising at Lock 5 will occur with water levels to increase by approximately 2-3 cm per day up to a target height of 0.5 m AHD above NPL (up to 16.8 m AHD). The continued weir pool raising and Pike Floodplain operations are planned to be completed in mid to late December 2020. The Pike Floodplain is closed to the general public during this time and ask that care should be taken when boating or canoeing around the area.

Throughout the system water levels are slowly rising and spilling into low lying floodplain and wetlands providing benefits for the vegetation including areas of river red gums and black box and understorey plants. The watering is already attracting a response by frogs including the threatened Southern bell frogs, which have now been recorded at seven sites, as well as providing habitat for a range of waterbirds.

The new environmental infrastructure at both Pike and Katarapko is being conservatively managed to maintain flows within the anabranch systems. During the operation there will be some increases in salinity and reductions in levels of dissolved oxygen levels but the sites are being cautiously managed. Water quality at the sites and in the river is closely monitored and the operations may be amended if conditions change more than expected. Water quality monitoring at the sites and within the river can be accessed via Water Connect

www.waterconnect.sa.gov.au/Systems/SiteInfo/Pages/Default.aspx?site=A4261053&period=HRLY#Parameter_Summary

QUARTERLY COMPLIANCE – QUARTER 2 ENDS ON 31 DECEMBER 2020

All South Australian River Murray water users are reminded that the Quarter 2 accounting period for 2020-21 ends on 31 December 2020. Compliance action will be taken if any water is taken in excess of the allocation available on a water account at the end of the quarter. For a water trade to be considered for Quarter 2, all paperwork must be lodged with the Department for Environment and Water before 5:00 pm on 31 December 2020.

In order to comply with the *Landscape South Australia Act 2019* by remaining within your available water allocation, you can:

- Stop taking water when you reach your allocation limit;
- Before you reach your allocation limit, trade water allocation onto your water account to cover your additional water needs; or
- Investigate whether water efficiency measures could be implemented for your property to decrease your demand for water.

To assist you to monitor your water use and remain within the water allocation available on your water account, you can submit an online meter reading at any time and elect to receive a water usage advice (similar to a bank statement) by email or SMS: <https://forms.business.gov.au/smartforms/sa-dfw/meter-reading-form/>.

For more information please read the fact sheet: [SA River Murray quarterly compliance factsheet](#), or [visit DEW's website](#), or contact the Berri water licensing office via telephone: (08) 8595 2053 or email: DEW.waterlicensingberri@sa.gov.au.

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 Locks 7 and 8 and in South Australia. All Mariners should be aware of the risk of submerged navigation hazards and should regularly check river depth.

RIVER MURRAY WATER LEVELS

Below is a table of River Murray water levels at a number of locations from Lock 10 to Murray Bridge.

River Murray Water Levels

Location	River km	Normal Pool Level (m AHD)	Current Level 28/10/2020 (m AHD)	1974 Flood Level (m AHD)	1993 Flood Level (m AHD)	2016 High Water Level (m AHD)
Lock 10	825.0	30.80	30.83	33.81	33.32	32.72
Lock 9 Kulnine	764.8	27.40	27.43	30.03	29.44	28.85
Lock 8 Wangumma	725.7	24.60	24.69	27.60	27.19	26.85
Lock 7 Rufus River	696.6	22.10	22.22	25.70	25.24	24.97
Lock 6 Murtho	619.8	19.25	19.35	21.03	20.50	20.19
Renmark	567.4	-	16.56	18.54	18.04	17.44
Lock 5	562.4	16.30	16.55	18.07	17.50	17.05
Lyrup	537.8	-	13.58	16.85	16.26	15.80
Berri	525.9	-	13.53	15.81	15.74	15.21
Lock 4	516.2	13.20	13.52	15.65	15.08	14.73
Loxton	489.9	-	10.30	15.05	14.12	13.54
Cobdogla	446.9	-	9.93	13.44	12.38	11.59
Lock 3	431.4	9.80	9.86	13.16	12.02	10.98
Overland Corner	425.9	-	6.58	12.73	11.58	10.41
Waikerie	383.6	-	6.43	11.26	10.24	9.20
Lock 2	362.1	6.10	6.31	10.28	9.30	8.32
Cadell	332.6	-	3.56	9.17	8.08	7.01
Morgan	321.7	-	3.48	8.85	7.65	6.38
Lock 1 Blanchetown	274.2	3.20	3.35	6.81	5.38	4.46
Swan Reach	245.0	0.75	0.90	6.06	4.51	3.11
Mannum PS	149.8	0.75	0.90	3.15	1.90	1.33
Murray Bridge	115.3	0.75	0.82	2.06	1.26	1.04

Note that the above water levels may be affected by local wind conditions

FURTHER INFORMATION

The WaterConnect website is South Australia's comprehensive water information portal. For real-time data (like salinity, water levels) go to the following page: [WaterConnect Real-time water data](#).

Up-to-date River Murray salinity, flow and water level information can be accessed at the Department for Environment and Water, SA Water and Murray-Darling Basin Authority websites:

- [Water allocation and carryover announcements](#)
- [River Murray real-time water data](#)
- [SA Water River Murray info - levels, flows etc.](#)
- [Murray-Darling Basin real-time water data](#)

The latest news, information and announcements about the River Murray and Basin Plan are available at [River Murray Update](#).

The Department for Environment and Water has published a series of inundation maps for the River Murray. They are available at [River Murray Inundation Maps](#).

Information on the management of acid drainage water in the Lower River Murray can be accessed at: [Managing Acid Sulfate Soils Research Project](#)

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:

- [Victoria rainfall and river conditions](#)
- [NSW rainfall and river conditions](#)

Information provided by the Commonwealth Environmental Water Office can be accessed at [CEWH Environmental Watering](#).

Information on The Living Murray can be accessed at [MDBA TLM](#).

Chowilla Floodplain Icon Site management [Chowilla-floodplain](#).

Department for Environment and Water [Home page](#).

Information provided by the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure on boat licences, registering motor boats, owning and operating water craft, and boat and marine safety can be accessed at [Boating and marine](#).

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