

River Murray Flow Report



Report #42/2021

Issued 10:00 am 29 October 2021

This supersedes the previous flow report issued by the Department for Environment and Water (DEW) on 22 October 2021. The next flow report will be provided on Friday 5 November 2021.

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.

FLOW OUTLOOK



The flow at the South Australian border is approximately 30 GL/day and will remain around 30 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*);
- interstate trade adjustments; and
- Unregulated flow.

The flow over Lock 1 is approximately 29 GL/day and will remain around 29 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.

QUARTER 1 METER READINGS DUE BY 31 OCTOBER 2021

If you hold a water resource works approval that includes a condition that requires you to provide quarterly meter readings to the Department for Environment and Water, please be reminded that meter readings for the Quarter 1 accounting period for 2020-21 (which ended on 30 September 2021) recorded within the first fourteen days of October 2021 must be submitted to the department by 31 October 2021.

Your meter reading can be submitted via one of the following options:

- The online Meter Reading Form at <https://forms.business.gov.au/smartforms/sa-dfw/meter-reading-form/>; or
- By emailing the Department for Environment and Water at DEW.waterlicensingberri@sa.gov.au.

Should you require any assistance in supplying your meter reading, including how to complete the online Meter Reading Form, please call the Berri office on (08) 8595 2053 and an officer of the department will be happy to assist you.

The department's preferred approach is to encourage and facilitate voluntary compliance. However, failure to voluntarily comply with the conditions of a water resource works approval may result in an expiation notice being issued.

WHAT IS AN UNREGULATED FLOW?

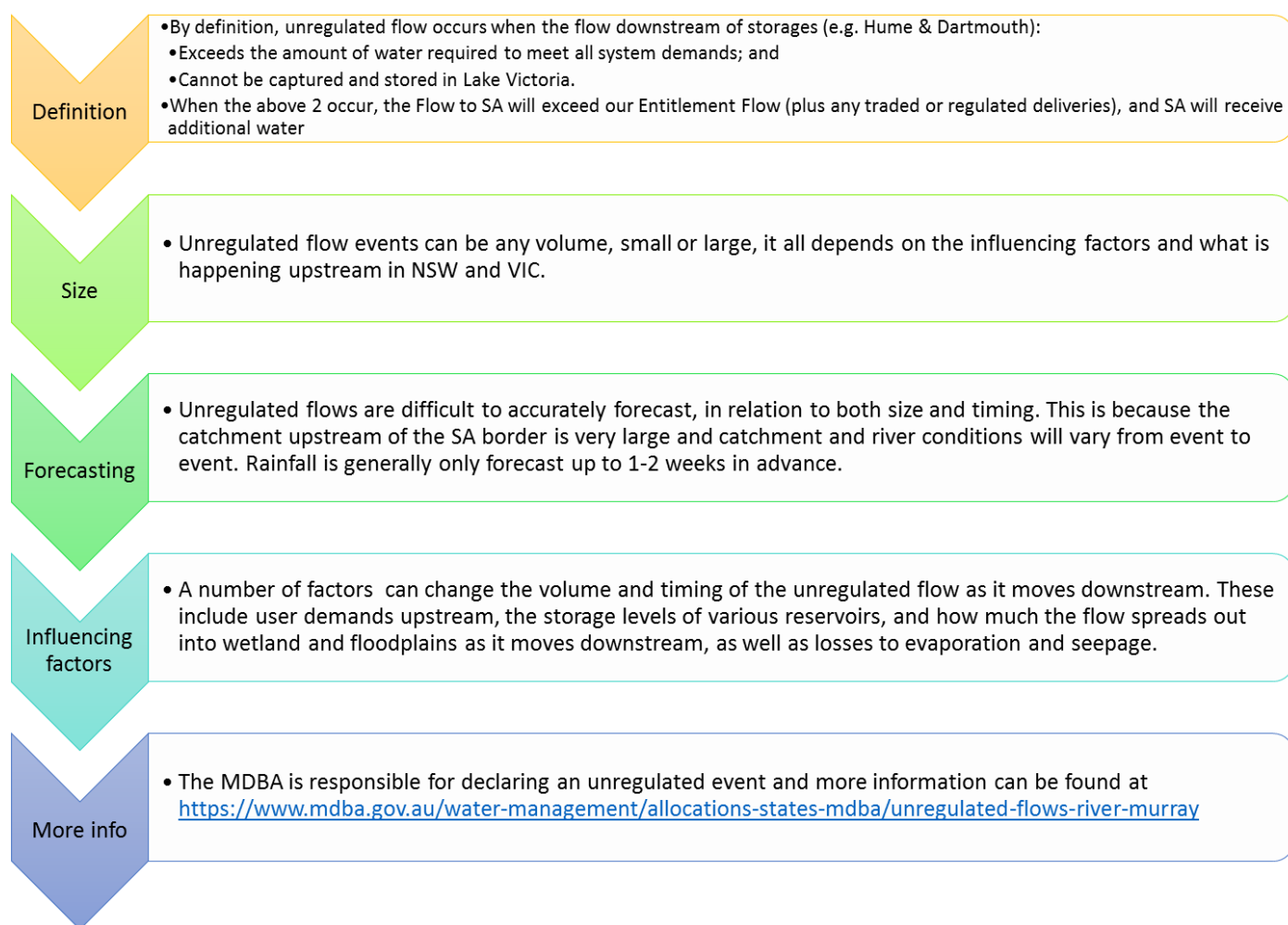


Figure 1: More information on unregulated flows can be found on the MBDA website at <https://www.mdba.gov.au/water-management/allocations-states-mdba/unregulated-flows-river-murray>

ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

Unregulated flow from spring rainfall in upstream catchments continues to reach South Australia. South Australia is also receiving water for the environment from South Australia's environmental water allocation and return flows from upstream watering actions including the 2021 Murray Wetland Flow. More information on this event can be found [here](#).

The current flows from the River Murray and upstream tributaries, through to the Coorong, will provide a range of benefits for the environment in SA, including:

- providing 'flowing water habitat' to benefit native fish, animals and plants in the River Murray channel that have adapted to a riverine environment, including supporting conditions that favour spawning and recruitment of golden perch and Murray cod;
- providing for 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;
- providing habitat for birds, frogs and threatened small-bodied native fish species in the Lower Lakes;
- maintaining good connections from the Coorong to the upstream areas of the River Murray, and its tributaries, to enable fish movement and migration;
- maintaining healthy water quality, salinity and water levels in the River Murray Channel and the Lower Lakes and Coorong;
- removing excess salt from the River Murray;
- undertaking floodplain operations at Chowilla, Pike and Katarapko as well as raising the water levels in weir pools 2, 4, 5 and 6 (see more details below in Environmental Water Operations); and

- Delivering a range of outcomes to wetlands in the Riverland via arrangements with Nature Foundation Limited, Renmark Irrigation Trust, Australian Landscape Trust, Accolade Wines Ltd and the Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board.

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 24 October 2021, a total of approximately 7 724 835 cubic metres of sand had been removed by dredging operations.

Both dredges are currently operating between the Goolwa and Tauwitchere channels 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Barrage releases combined with dredging have helped to maintain flow connectivity of the River Murray Channel to the Murray Mouth and have assisted in exporting salt from the river system.

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 0.80 m AHD and Lake Albert is approximately 0.85 m AHD. The difference is due to wind effects.

As of Tuesday 26 October 2021, the weekly releases were approximately 170 GL. Gate openings at the barrages during the week can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1: Number of barrage gates open each day for the week ending Tuesday 19 October 2021

Barrage (total number of gates)	20 Oct 2021	21 Oct 2021	22 Oct 2021	23 Oct 2021	24 Oct 2021	25 Oct 2021	26 Oct 2021	Objective of releases
Goolwa (120)	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	Maintain connectivity between the River Murray channel through to the Murray Mouth to support fish migration, provide some scouring of the Goolwa Channel and Murray Mouth.
Mundoo (25)	6*	6*	6*→3*	3*→0→3*	3*→0→3*	3*	3*	Provide some localised freshening conditions in the Mundoo channel and support fish passage.
Boundary Creek (5)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	Provide attractant flow adjacent the fish way to support fish passage.
Ewe Island (110)	12*	12*	12*	12*	12*	12*	12*	Releases will help push fresher water down the Coorong to assist lowering salinity levels and provide habitat diversity.
Tauwitchere (319)	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	
Fishways	Fishways at all barrages and at Hunters Creek (11 in total) were open during the entire week							Provide for fish passage between the Coorong and Lower Lakes.

*Automated gate utilised to maximise delivery to Coorong and avoid reverse flows.

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

Lock 3

The Lock 3 River Vessel Waste Disposal Station is currently out of commission due to an infrastructure failure. Investigations are underway to replace the station. In the interim river vessel users can contact Riverland Tank and Drain directly on 0412 839 392 for emptying of black and grey water in the Lock 3 area. Alternatively they can utilise the nearest alternative waste facility located at Waikerie. Normal boat waste (domestic or galley waste) can still be deposited at the Lock 3 facility at the present time.

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.

ENVIRONMENTAL WATER OPERATIONS

Chowilla Floodplain and Weir and Lock 6

A low to mid-level operation of the Chowilla environmental regulator commenced in July 2021. The operation raised water levels in Chowilla Creek and through the Anabranche to a maximum height of 19.6 m AHD. The water level is now being lowered back to normal pool level (NPL).

The water level in Weir and Lock 6 was also raised in conjunction with the Chowilla Regulator and reached a maximum height of 19.68 m AHD. The water level is now being lowered back to NPL.

Pike Floodplain and Weir and Lock 5

Operations on the Pike Floodplain commenced 26 July 2021 and are planned to continue until late December 2021. The operation reached its planned maximum level on 30 September 2021 (15.8 m AHD), and is being held through the remainder of October. Following that the water levels will be slowly drawn down with the event due to be complete in December 2021.

The Lock 5 weir pool is temporarily raised by 50 cm to 16.8 m AHD in conjunction with the Pike floodplain watering to assist water flow through the floodplain. Over the coming week the Department for Environment and Water plans to start reducing the water levels slowly back to normal pool levels with monitoring occurring on a daily basis.



Figure 2: Long thumbed frog discovered during a survey on the Pike Floodplain (Michelle Denny, DEW)

Katarapko Floodplain and Weir and Lock 4

Operations on the Katarapko Floodplain also commenced 26 July 2021 and reached the maximum planned height of 13.2 m AHD on 15 September 2021, delivering water across about 800 hectares of the floodplain. Drawdown of water levels within the floodplain is underway.

The Lock 4 weir pool level has been raised for the duration of the event to 13.50 m AHD to assist with water flow into the Katarapko Creek system and is being drawdown at a rate of approximately 3 cm / day. Water levels will be lowered slowly in the floodplain and in the weir pool with monitoring occurring on a daily basis.

Weir and Lock 2

The water level in Weir and Lock 2 is now being lowered after being at the maximum height of the event for over 40 days. The water level will be lowered back to normal pool level at a rate of 3 cm / day (expected to be in early November 2021).

National Park access

There are some short term access restrictions and closures of some roads, trails and campsites due to the environmental watering at Katarapko and Chowilla floodplains. On-site signage provides guidance about safe access. More information can be found at <https://www.parks.sa.gov.au/> or by contacting the Berri Regional Office on 8595 2111

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 27/10/2021 (m AHD)	2016 High Water Level (m AHD)
Lock 10	825.0	30.80	30.83	32.72
Lock 9 Kulnine	764.8	27.40	27.53	28.85
Lock 8 Wangumma	725.7	24.60	24.88	26.85
Lock 7 Rufus River	696.6	22.10	23.02	24.97
Lock 6 Murtho	619.8	19.25	19.67	20.19
Renmark	567.4	-	16.88	17.44
Lock 5	562.4	16.30	16.84	17.05
Lyrup	537.8	-	13.75	15.80
Berri	525.9	-	13.58	15.21
Lock 4	516.2	13.20	13.47	14.73
Loxton	489.9	-	11.13	13.54
Cobdogla	446.9	-	-	11.59
Lock 3	431.4	9.80	9.82	10.98
Overland Corner	425.9	-	7.43	10.41
Waikerie	383.6	-	6.61	9.20
Lock 2	362.1	6.10	6.18	8.32
Cadell	332.6	-	4.14	7.01
Morgan	321.7	-	3.76	6.38
Lock 1 Blanchetown	274.2	3.20	3.22	4.46
Swan Reach	245.0	0.75	1.15	3.11
Mannum PS	149.8	0.75	0.81	1.33
Murray Bridge	115.3	0.75	0.74	1.04

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

FURTHER INFORMATION

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

Up-to-date River Murray salinity, flow and water level information can also be accessed at the 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](#).

[Katarapko Floodplain](#) site management

[Pike Floodplain](#) site management

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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