

River Murray Flow Report



Report #20/2022

Issued 10:00 am 27 May 2022

This supersedes the previous flow report issued by the Department for Environment and Water (DEW) on 20 May 2022. The next flow report will be provided on Friday 3 June 2022.

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



Over the coming weeks the flow to South Australia will be increasing due to a number of factors including increased releases from Menindee Lakes in response to continuing inflows arriving from the northern Murray-Darling Basin. The flow at the South Australian border is approximately 26.5 GL/day and will increase to around 27 GL/day over the coming week. It comprises:

- full May Entitlement Flow (3 GL/day);
- plus water for the environment (see below *Environmental News*);
- interstate trade adjustments;
- Additional Dilution Flow (ADF); and
- Unregulated flow.

The flow over Lock 1 is approximately 23.5 GL/day and will increase to around 26 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

Since July 2021, South Australia has been receiving elevated flows above or on 'top of' the South Australian Entitlement Flow. These flows have comprised different types of water including water for the environment, unregulated flows and Additional Dilution Flow.

The majority of the elevated flows have been unregulated flows and these have been due to numerous large rain events in the north and east of the Murray-Darling Basin across the last 10 months.

As inflows are continuing into systems upstream, such as the Lower Darling/Barka, elevated flows to South Australia will continue for the time being. When exactly they will end depends on a range of factors including storage levels of upstream dams, usage, losses, rainfall and catchment conditions.

Water for the environment and unregulated flows have provided and continue to 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. For example, recent monitoring indicates that flowing conditions in the river since spring may have supported the first major spawning and recruitment event for golden perch in the Lower Murray in a decade;
- allowing fish dispersal and movement into new habitats, including for young golden perch which may have travelled down the Great Darling Anabranch into the Murray in recent months;
- providing for barrage releases to the Coorong to support a productive, food-rich environment for fish and birds and provide salinities and water levels that support healthy populations of keystone native plant *Ruppia tuberosa*. For example, recent monitoring indicates that extended freshwater flows to the Coorong through spring to autumn have supported a major recruitment event for the Coorong black bream population. Hundreds of baby black bream have been recorded by scientists in autumn 2022;
- providing habitat for birds, frogs and threatened small-bodied native fish species in the Lower Lakes;
- 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; and
- delivering a range of outcomes to wetlands in the Riverland via arrangements with Nature Foundation Limited, Australian Landscape Trust, Accolade Wines Ltd and the Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board.



Figure 1: Paddlers enjoying the benefits of environmental watering on the Katarapko floodplain (K. Williamson)

Water quality – Algal blooms

Algal levels around Mildura have increased recently and as a result the following **amber** alerts for blue-green algae are in place upstream of the SA border:

- Murray River at Buronga;
- Murray River at Merbein;
- Murray River at Curlwaa;
- Murray River at Fort Courage; and
- Murray River at Lock 8.

In New South Wales, **Amber** alerts indicate that blue-green algae may be multiplying and water may have a green tinge and musty or organic odour. This water should be considered unsuitable for potable use.

Further information on the alert can be found on the WaterNSW website: <https://www.waternsw.com.au/water-quality/algae>

Ongoing water quality sampling has detected low levels of blue-green algae in the River Murray of South Australia. These localised detections don't currently represent a health hazard.

As a standard and precautionary measure, **SA Health encourages people to avoid contact with obvious green discoloured water**, as it may cause skin irritations.

Some level of blue-green algae on a large open water source like the River Murray is normal for this time of year, when weather conditions are favourable for growth. SA Water, SA Health and DEW will continue to monitor the situation upstream and will take appropriate mitigation measures, as well as provide notification to the community, as needed.

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 22 May 2022, a total of approximately 8,262,115 m³ of sand has been removed from the Murray Mouth. Both dredges are fully operational working 12 hours a day, 7 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 0.63 m AHD and Lake Albert is also approximately 0.67 m AHD. The difference is due to wind effects.

As of Tuesday 24 May 2022, the weekly releases were approximately 126 GL. Total daily release volumes from the barrage can now be accessed via [Water Data SA](#) by searching for the gauge [A4261002](#). 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 24 May 2022

Barrage (total number of gates)	18 May 2022	19 May 2022	20 May 2022	21 May 2022	22 May 2022	23 May 2022	24 May 2022	Objective of releases
Goolwa (120)	0→3→0	0→3	3	3	3	3	3	Maintain connectivity between the River Murray channel through to the Murray Mouth to support fish migration.
Mundoo (25)	0→6*→0→6*	6*	6*	6*	6*	6*	6*	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.
Tauwichee (319)	65	65	65	65	65	65	65	
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.

Lock 3 River Vessel Waste Disposal Station

The Lock 3 River Vessel Waste Disposal Station is currently out of commission due to an infrastructure failure.

Investigations are currently 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.

River Murray water levels

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

Location	River km	Normal Pool Level (m AHD)	Current Level 25/5/2022 (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	27.42	28.85
Lock 8 Wangumma	725.7	24.60	24.52	26.85
Lock 7 Rufus River	696.6	22.10	22.76	24.97
Lock 6 Murtho	619.8	19.25	19.28	20.19
Renmark	567.4	-	16.33	17.44
Lock 5	562.4	16.30	16.33	17.05
Lyrup	537.8	-	13.46	15.80
Berri	525.9	-	13.32	15.21
Lock 4	516.2	13.20	13.23	14.73
Loxton	489.9	-	10.86	13.54
Cobdogla	446.9	-	-	11.59
Lock 3	431.4	9.80	9.82	10.98
Overland Corner	425.9	-	7.09	10.41
Waikerie	383.6	-	6.48	9.20
Lock 2	362.1	6.10	6.13	8.32
Cadell	332.6	-	3.95	7.01
Morgan	321.7	-	3.66	6.38
Lock 1 Blanchetown	274.2	3.20	3.23	4.46
Swan Reach	245.0	0.75	0.86	3.11
Mannum PS	149.8	0.75	0.61	1.33
Murray Bridge	115.3	0.75	0.55	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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