

Operations update



Update on Releases from Menindee lakes

14 September 2020

Storage and Inflows

Lake Wetherell and Tandure are now holding 146 GL, Lake Pamamaroo and Copi Hollow 318 GL - Total storage volume is 464 GL.

A small inflow to Wetherell commenced on 21 August, with approximately 13 GL of inflow being recorded since.

Flows at Bourke are currently around 1,300 ML/day and have been steady above 1,000 ML/day for the past month. Flow at Wilcannia is currently around 900 ML/day and are expected to remain steady over the coming weeks.

The Wetherell level has now increased to about 10 cm above that of Pamamaroo. As such the Pamamaroo inlet regulator shall be opened this week. This will allow the water levels in the two sections of the storage to equalise. The action is aimed at minimising surface area and area inundated for the volume in storage and minimising system losses.

Releases and Downstream Flows

Releases have been targeting 200 ML/day at Weir 32 since May, with the current flow being approximately 210 ML/day.

WaterNSW has received and accepted a water order from the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment – Environment, Energy and Science Group, who have responsibility for environmental water delivery in NSW, that will increase flow at Weir 32 from 200 ML/day to 400 ML/day from 15 September to the end of October.

Further environmental water delivery is planned through November to mid-January. However, the environmental water delivery rates will be managed based on monitoring information collected in October.

The river flow at Pooncarie Weir has falling steadily over the past month and is now at around 90 ML/day and flow at Burtundy Weir has also fallen steadily and is now at around 80 ML/day.

Operations Planning – Forecast

While the storage has received a small amount of inflow recently, WaterNSW continues to plan system operations to maximise the systems efficiency and maintain resources for as long as possible.

Minimum releases at Weir 32 as per the Water Sharing Plan requirement provides for approximately 90 GL of water over Weir 32 each year. The flow rates each month is set by the Water Sharing Plan – May to October 200 ML/day; November, December and April 300 ML/day; and January to March 350 ML/day.

The WaterNSW operations plan now includes delivery of environmental water between 15 September 2020 and 15 January 2021 – a total volume of up to 25.9 GL.

The Bureau of Meteorology forecast remains positive with an increased likelihood of above average rainfall for the October to December period, however WaterNSW continues to prepare plans for operations under the worst-case scenario.

Under the scenario of no further inflow and conservative modelling by WaterNSW, releases at Weir 32 may be maintained until January 2022.

The key assumptions used in this conservative modelling are:

- No further inflows;
- Releases at Water Sharing Plan requirements – modelling has not considered reducing releases below these requirements, this could occur as a drought management action;
- Release at request of environmental water managers – from 15 September 2020 to 15 January 2021 a volume up to 25.9 GL;
- Maximum evaporation rates;
- Implementation of pumping from Tandure to Wetherell when storage levels fall to levels that facilitate such an action.

Allocation Assignments – Trade

Allocation assignments or trade between licences within the Lower Darling is currently permitted. Several customers have raised the issue of allowing trade between the Lower Darling and Murray. At present, in accordance with the rules trade between valleys is not permitted. Trade between valleys is unlikely to be permitted until the storage volume reaches 640 GL as per the current rules.

For more information: Phone: 1300 662 077; Email: Customer.Helpdesk@waternsw.com.au

Authorised by

Vincent Kelly,
Water Systems Operation Manager South