Operations update

Update on Releases from Menindee lakes

12 June 2020

Storage and Inflows

Lake Wetherell and Tandure are now holding 150 GL, Lake Pamamaroo 318 GL and Copi Hollow 11 GL - Total storage volume is 479 GL.

To date inflow has totalled 577 GL.

Flow at Wilcannia has now fallen to around 700 ML/day and will continue to steadily recede without further rainfall in the upstream catchment.

The storage level has remained stable over the past week and is therefore at or close to a peak storage level.

Pamamaroo Inlet regulator remains open, this is allowing the water level in Lake Wetherell - Tandure and Lake Pamamaroo to equalise. When the storage level begins to fall, Pamamaroo Inlet will be closed, and releases shall be made from Wetherell outlet. This action is aimed at minimising surface area and area inundated for the volume in storage and minimising system losses.

Releases and Downstream Flows

Releases are now targeting 200 ML/day at Weir 32, with the current flow being approximately 220 ML/day. The minimum flow requirement for June to October is 200 ML/day at Weir 32 – WaterNSW will continue to target the minimum requirement – unless environmental water is added to release.

To date approximately 59 GL has been released over Weir 32, this included the initial restart pulse of 46 GL between 27 March and 18 April 2020, and 13 GL since 18 April.

The river level at Pooncarie Weir has been steady at around 2.45 m and flow at Burtundy Weir has been steady at around 110 ML/day.

Operations Planning – Forecast

As the storage is approaching a peak from the current inflow event, WaterNSW is focusing on updating the operations plan for the Lower Darling.

At present, WaterNSW is planning to continue minimum releases at Weir 32 as per the Water Sharing Plan requirement – this 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 current seasonal forecast from the Bureau of Meteorology is for increased likelihood of above average rainfall for the July to September period, however WaterNSW continues to prepare plans for operations under the worst-case scenario. Under this 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 beyond the current event;
- Releases at Water Sharing Plan requirements – modelling has not considered reducing releases below these requirements, this could occur as a drought management action;
- No release at request of environmental water managers – this action is permitted, but the modelling to assess the duration of available resources has not considered this additional demand at this time;
- 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.

**Water Carting**

A rebate to assist with water carting costs is available to all customers along the Lower Darling, this now includes landholders within the influence of Weir 32. These rebates are available retrospectively for the current financial year. Applications can be made at Service NSW via the following web link:


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

Authorised by

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