

REPORT FOR THE WEEK ENDING

Wednesday, 7 May 2008



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9 May, 2008

Rainfall and Inflows

During the past week, light rain was recorded across the southern parts of the Murray-Darling Basin with most Victorian regions receiving between 1 – 10 mm and southern NSW receiving 1 – 5 mm (see map). Greta, in northeast Vic, experienced the highest rainfall this week of 21 mm.

River Operations

Over the past week the release from Hume Dam was varied between 900 and 600 ML/day in order to maintain the normal winter minimum flow at Doctors Point of 1 200 ML/day. Starting on Thursday the 8th May, the release from Hume Dam will be further lowered to a minimum of around 400 ML/day as reported last week, to achieve a revised winter minimum of 800 ML/day.

Following the operational plans announced last week the level of Lake Mulwala is being steadily lowered by a further 200 mm to around 124.0 m AHD by the end of the week. The lowering will continue and if conditions remain dry the pool level is expected to be reduced to around 123.8 m AHD by mid-May. A decline in irrigation diversions downstream of Lake Mulwala, combined with falling transmission losses along the Murray have enabled release from Yarrawonga Weir to be reduced from 3 000 ML/day to 2 500 ML/day. Under a dry scenario, further reductions in release can be expected as the irrigation season draws to a close and winter conditions set in.

The upper pool level of Stevens Weir on the Edward River has been reduced by NSW State Water from 4.54 to 4.35 m AHD over the past week and is expected to continue to fall, albeit at a slower rate, over the coming weeks. Water stored in the Stevens Weir pool will be drawn upon over the coming months to supply the Edward River, to assist with the conservation of water in Hume Reservoir. Mulwala Canal is being gradually emptied by Murray Irrigation Limited, with the flow at the Edward Escape (into the Edward River) declining this week from 700 to 200 ML/day.

Torrumbarry Weir release declined from 2 100 to 1 800 ML/day this week and is expected to reduce to around 1 700 ML/day next week. The river level at Swan Hill increased from 0.56 to 0.63 m (local gauge height), but is likely to be below the normal minimum level of 0.6 m whilst dry conditions persist and regulated releases are constrained. Release from Euston Weir reduced from 2 800 ML/day to 2 100 ML/day and is likely to increase slightly over the coming week.

The Mildura Weir pool is currently 3 cm above Full Supply Level (FSL) and the release has increased from 2 000 ML/day to 2 700 ML/day. Wentworth Weir pool is 4 cm above FSL and the release has increased from 1 600 ML/day to 2 300 ML/day. These rises in flow in the river are being contained in Lake Victoria, where inflow to the Lake has been increased from 0 to 1 000 ML/day. Storage in Lake Victoria has remained steady at around 269 GL.

During the past few weeks, river salinities from Lock 6 downstream to Lock 1 have remained fairly steady. At Morgan, for instance, the salinity is 400 EC compared with 410 EC in mid April. The salinity at Milang on Lake Alexandrina continues to gradually increase and is currently around 3 700 EC compared with 3 500 EC in early April. The water level in Lake Alexandrina is steady at about -0.5 m AHD (or 50cm below mean sea level).

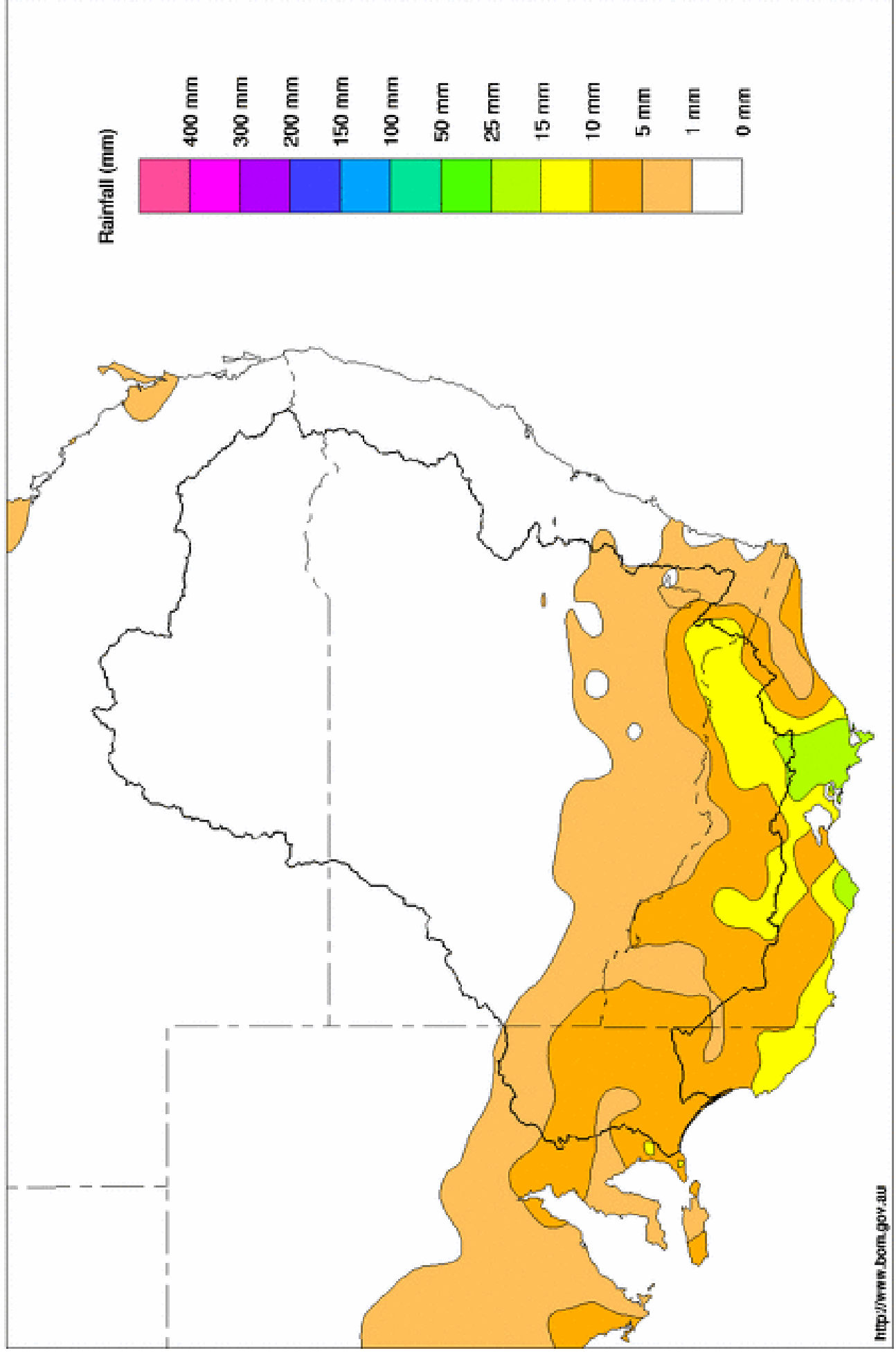
For more information regarding the Murray system operational strategy over the next few months refer to the attached Drought Update for May 2008.

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Murray Darling Rainfall Analysis (mm) Week Ending 7th May 2008
Product of the National Climate Centre



Water in Storage

MDBC Storages	Full Supply Level (m AHD)	Full Supply Volume (GL)	Current Storage Level (m AHD)	Current Storage		Dead Storage (GL)	MDBC Active Storage (GL)	Change in Storage for the week (GL)
				(GL)	%			
Dartmouth Reservoir	486.00	3 906	410.95	681	17%	80	601	+2
Hume Reservoir	192.00	3 038	170.11	280	9%	30	250	+30
Lake Victoria	27.00	677	23.23	268	40%	100	168	-1
Menindee Lakes		1 731 *		569	33%	(- -) #	0	-8
Total		9 352		1 798	19%	--	1 019	+24

* Menindee surcharge capacity 2050 GL

% of Total Active MDBC Storage = **12%**

NSW takes control of Menindee Lakes when storage falls below 480 GL, and control reverts to MDBC when storage next reaches 640 GL

Major State Storages

Burrinjuck Reservoir	1 026	423	41%	3	420	-1
Blowering Reservoir	1 631	425	26%	24	401	+27
Eildon Reservoir	3 390	452	13%	100	352	-0

Snowy Mountains Scheme

Snowy diversions for week ending 06-May-2008

Storage	Active storage (GL)	Weekly change (GL)	Diversions (GL)	This week	From 1 May 2008
Lake Eucumbene - Total	346	-26	Snowy-Murray	+24	19
Snowy-Murray Component	290	-12	Tooma-Tumut	+3	3
Target Storage	1 290		Nett Diversion	20.9	16
			Murray 1 Release	+23	17

Major Diversions from Murray and Lower Darling (GL)

New South Wales	This week	From 1 July 2007
Murray Irrig. Ltd (Net)	- 3.0	91.7
Wakool System loss	0.6	21.1
Western Murray Irrig.	0.1	21.7
Licensed Pumps	1.1	82.7
Lower Darling	0.2	10.6
TOTAL	-1.0	227.6

Victoria	This week	From 1 July 2007
Yarrowonga Main Channel (net)	3.3	133
Torrumbarry System + Nyah (net)	6.2	235
Sunraysia Pumped Districts	0.7	91 *
Licensed pumps - GMW (Nyah+u/s)	0.4	13
Licensed pumps - LMW	2.3	171
TOTAL	12.9	644 *

* please note that these values do not include Millewa pumping figures.

Flow to South Australia (GL)

Entitlement this month	93 *	
Flow this week	14.2	(2 000 ML/day)
Flow so far this month	14	
Flow last month	74	

* Reduced to approx. 60 GL during April drought contingency operations

Salinity (EC)

(microsiemens/cm @ 25° C)

	Current	Average over the last week	Average since 1 August 2007
Swan Hill	70	60	90
Euston	100	100	120
Red Cliffs	-	-	130
Merbein	270	270	150
Burtundy (Darling)	300	290	880
Lock 9	230	230	150
Lake Victoria	240	240	190
Berri	310	320	350
Waikerie	-	-	530
Morgan	390	390	570
Mannum	640	660	660
Murray Bridge	740	750	680
Milang (Lake Alex.)	3 690	3 670	2 920
Poltalloch (Lake Alex.)	2 890	2 910	2 530
Meningie (Lake Alb.)	-	-	3 150
Goolwa Barrages	25 410	24 950	20 580



River Levels and Flows

	Minor Flood stage (m)	Gauge height		Flow (ML/day)	Trend	Average flow this week (ML/day)	Average flow last week (ML/day)
		local (m)	(m AHD)				
River Murray							
Khancoban	-	-	-	1 980	F	3 420	3 800
Jingellic	4.0	1.48	208.00	2 990	F	4 210	3 580
Tallandoon (Mitta Mitta River)	4.2	1.28	218.17	410	R	390	400
Heywoods	5.5	1.33	154.96	900	S	730	1 260
Doctors Point	5.5	1.47	149.94	1 160	F	1 390	1 550
Albury	4.3	0.66	148.10	-	-	-	-
Corowa	7.0	0.49	126.51	1 280	F	1 430	2 150
Yarrowonga Weir (d/s)	6.4	0.50	115.54	2 510	F	2 790	3 360
Tocumwal	6.4	0.98	104.82	2 710	F	2 970	3 510
Torrumbarry Weir (d/s)	7.3	0.89	79.44	1 810	R	1 930	2 020
Swan Hill	4.5	0.63	63.55	2 230	S	2 120	2 420
Wakool Junction	8.8	1.54	50.66	2 600	R	2 400	2 650
Euston Weir (d/s)	8.8	0.50	42.34	2 100	R	2 410	2 170
Mildura Weir (d/s)	-	-	-	2 730	F	2 820	2 020
Wentworth Weir (d/s)	7.3	2.84	27.60	2 260	F	2 270	1 520
Rufus Junction	-	2.49	19.42	1 210	F	1 300	1 460
Blanchetown (Lock 1 d/s)	-	0.47	-	930	F	1 000	960
Tributaries							
Kiewa at Bandiana	2.7	0.77	154.00	345	F	770	230
Ovens at Wangaratta	11.9	7.78	145.46	406	S	400	340
Goulburn at McCoys Bridge	9.0	1.14	92.56	403	S	400	370
Edward at Stevens Weir (d/s)	-	0.96	80.73	690	S	690	680
Edward at Liewah	-	1.24	56.62	657	R	550	480
Wakool at Stoney Crossing	-	0.91	54.40	0	F	0	0
Murrumbidgee at Balranald	5.0	0.46	56.42	213	S	220	200
Barwon at Mungindi	-	3.16	-	2	F	10	30
Darling at Bourke	-	3.99	-	34	S	40	60
Darling at Burtundy Rocks	-	0.71	-	63	F	70	90

Natural Inflow to Hume (ie pre Dartmouth & Snowy Mountains scheme)	2 090	750
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Weirs and Locks

Pool levels above or below design level

Murray	FSL (m AHD)	u/s	d/s		FSL (m AHD)	u/s	d/s
Yarrowonga	124.90	-0.87	-	No. 7 Rufus River	22.10	+0.09	+0.17
No 26 Torrumbarry	86.05	+0.00	-	No. 6 Murtho	19.25	+0.00	-0.07
No. 15 Euston	47.60	-0.01	-	No. 5 Renmark	16.30	+0.00	+0.07
No. 11 Mildura	34.40	+0.03	+0.06	No. 4 Bookpurnong	13.20	+0.03	+0.21
No. 10 Wentworth	30.80	+0.04	+0.20	No.3 Overland Corner	9.80	+0.09	+0.18
No. 9 Kulnine	27.40	+0.05	+0.10	No. 2 Waikerie	6.10	+0.10	+0.06
No. 8 Wangumma	24.60	+0.11	+0.20	No 1. Blanchetown	3.20	+0.02	-0.28

Murrumbidgee	FSL (m AHD)	relation to FSL	d/s gauge ht.		Flow (ML/day)
			local (m)	(m AHD)	
No. 7 Maude	75.40	-2.01	0.5	69.85	170
No. 5 Redbank	66.90	-3.79	0.11	61.41	236



Lower Lakes

FSL = 0.75 m AHD

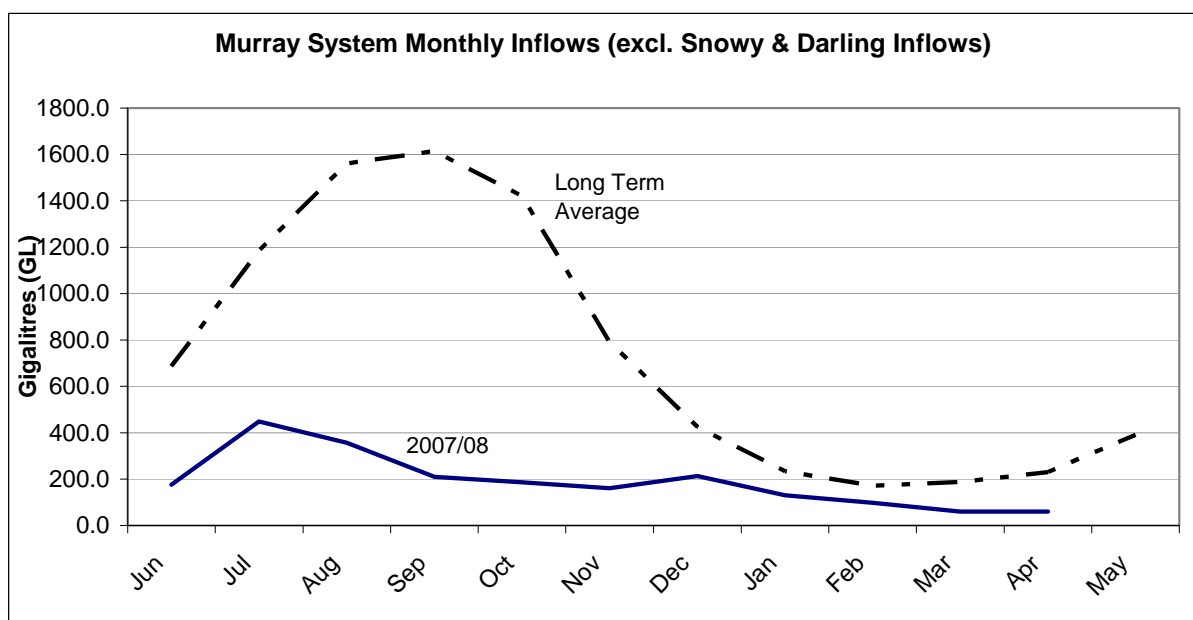
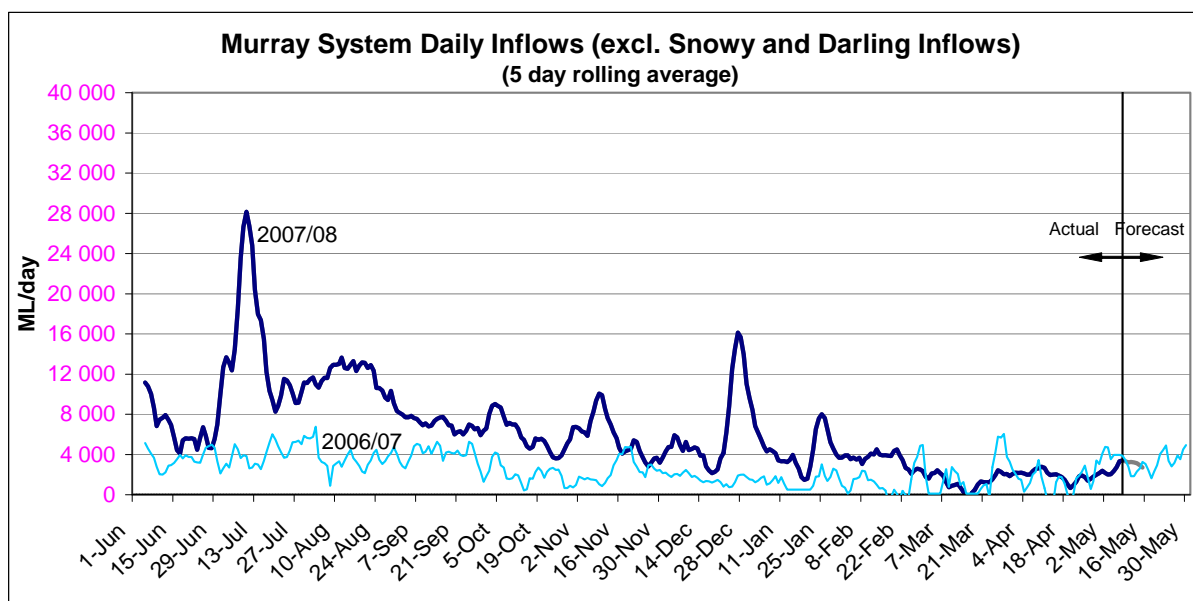
	(m AHD)
Lake Alexandrina average level for the past 5 days	-0.49

Barrages

Fishways @ Barrages

	Openings	Level (m AHD)	Status	Rock Ramp	Vertical Slot
Goolwa	128 openings	-0.47	All closed	-	Closed
Mundoo	26 openings	-0.45	All closed	-	-
Boundary Creek	6 openings	-	All closed	-	-
Ewe Island	111 gates	-	All closed	-	-
Tauwitchere	322 gates	-	All closed	Closed	Closed

AHD = Level relative to Australian Height Datum, i.e. height above sea level



State Allocations (as at 7th May 2008)

NSW - Murray Valley

High security	25%
General security	0%

NSW - Murrumbidgee Valley

High security	90%
General security	13%

NSW - Lower Darling

High security	100%
General security	50%

Victoria - Murray Valley

high reliability	43%
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Victoria - Goulburn Valley

high reliability	57%
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South Australia - Murray Valley

irrigation allocation	32%
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NSW : http://www.naturalresources.nsw.gov.au/water/state_mm_murr_water_quality.shtml#alloc

VIC : <http://www.g-mwater.com.au/water-resources/allocations/current.asp>

SA : <http://www.dwlbc.sa.gov.au/media.html>



MEDIA RELEASE

EMBARGOED UNTIL 10.30 AM FRIDAY 9 MAY, 2008

Murray drought continues with no improvement in water availability in sight

There are no signs of improvement in water availability in the Murray system over the next few months according to the Murray-Darling Basin Commission's latest Drought Update released today.

Chief Executive Dr Wendy Craik AM said rainfall during March and April had been below average and system inflows were very low.

"This is disappointing as historical records show that after a dry autumn, inflows into the upper Murray are not likely to be high," she said.

"While storages are slightly higher than this time last year, they are still well below long term averages and the prospects for irrigation over the coming year will have to depend entirely on rainfall over winter and spring."

Dr Craik said lower water availability would impact on all users and the environment. Critical urban, stock and domestic water needs for 2008-09 were reasonably assured.

"Opening allocations for Murray irrigators are again expected to be very low or zero, though carryover water is reasonably assured," Dr Craik said.

"The condition of the Coorong and Lower Lakes in South Australia is grave and deteriorating. There has been no flow through the barrages since 2006 and last week we started pumping water into Lake Albert to prevent any further exposure of sulfidic sediments.

"We are formulating medium to long term options for the Lower Lakes which we will present to the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council."

Dr Craik said other environmental concerns included the future of wetlands along the Murray which were disconnected to cut evaporative losses.

"We might have to partially re-fill some wetlands to prevent serious and possibly irreversible degradation, as we are doing at Banrock Station Wetland later this month," Dr Craik said.

Dr Craik said the MDBC would continue to run the system to maximise water availability. This will include continuing reduced minimum flows from Hume Reservoir and minimum flows downstream of Yarrowonga to the South Australian border.

"For the longer term, we are concerned at new evidence showing climate change is linked to the lower autumn rainfall in south eastern Australia. However, we will continue to work with all relevant State and Commonwealth governments on effective contingency plans," Dr Craik said

A copy of the latest Murray System Drought Update is available at www.mdbc.gov.au

Media contact: Sam Leone, Phone: 0407 006 332

Trim ref: 08/4344



MURRAY SYSTEM

Drought Update

ISSUE 13: MAY 2008

IN BRIEF

Autumn rainfall to date has been below average, and Murray System inflows during March and April have remained extremely low - approaching the record lows seen in 2007. Historical records indicate that, after a dry autumn, the chance that upper Murray inflows will be high this coming winter/spring is greatly reduced.

There is also growing evidence that lower rainfall and reduced runoff in south-eastern Australia, particularly in autumn, is linked to global warming.

Headwater storage levels are slightly higher than the record low levels of this time last year (due to higher levels of carryover) but still well below average.

A significant difference to this time last year is the severe and deteriorating outlook for the Lower Lakes in South Australia.

The prospects for irrigation in 2008-09 are entirely dependent on rainfall and streamflows over winter and spring, which is the critical period for runoff in the high yielding catchments of the upper Murray, Mitta Mitta, Kiewa and Ovens Rivers.

The Murray-Darling Basin Commission continues to undertake contingency planning and implement appropriate measures in consultation with relevant State and Australian government agencies.

THE CURRENT SITUATION

Unseasonably warm weather affected much of southern Australia in the first half of March 2008, whilst autumn rainfall has tended to be below average. Murray system inflows during March and April 2008 have approached the record lows experienced in 2007 (see Figure 1).

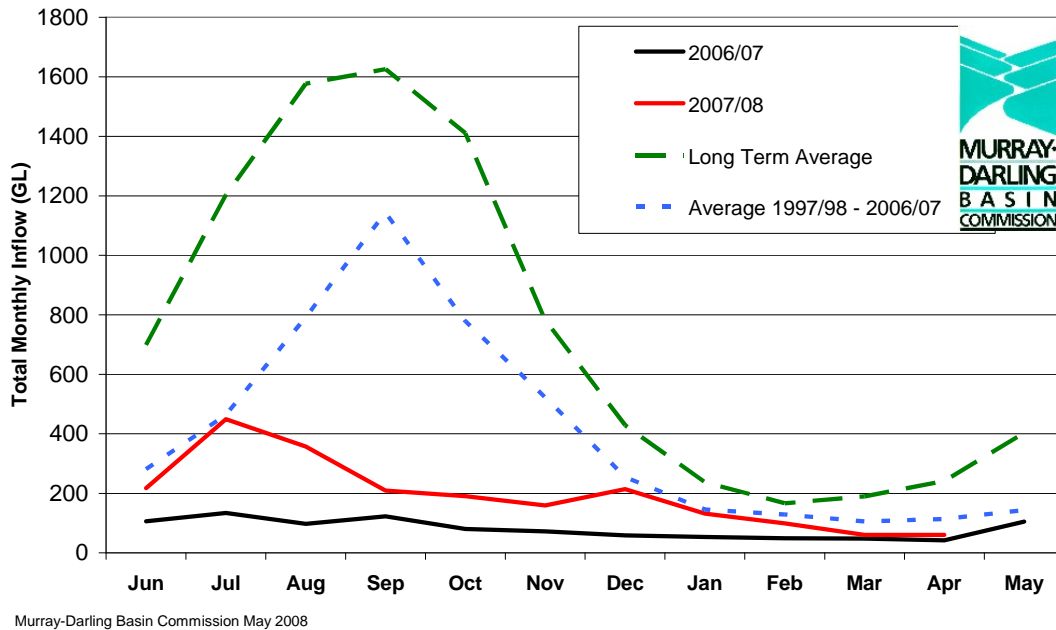


Figure 1. Murray system inflows (excluding Menindee and Snowy). Long term average and selected water years

The extreme dry state of the upper Murray catchments indicates that winter rainfall would need to be well above average to produce average inflows to upper Murray storages. Historical records show that the chances of winter/spring inflows reaching average levels after such a dry autumn are reduced.

The Bureau of Meteorology has reported that most indicators of the El Niño - Southern Oscillation are now neutral and that the La Niña event in the Pacific Basin has dissipated. Neutral conditions are expected to remain throughout winter. The outlook for rainfall over May to July shows a moderate shift in the odds towards a wetter than normal season over the northern half of the Murray-Darling Basin. In the southern half of the Basin the chances of rainfall being higher than normal are about the same as the chances of being lower.

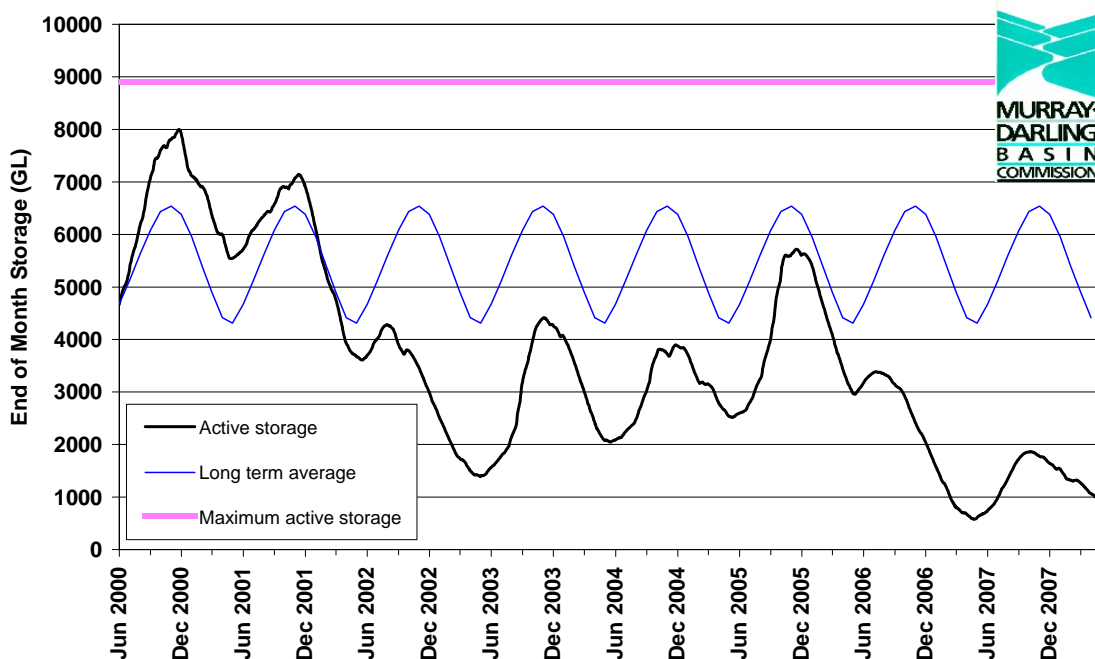


Figure 2. MDBC active storage; June 2000 to April 2008

MDBC active storage is currently 1020 GL, or 12 % of capacity (see Figure 2), which is slightly higher than this time last year (630 GL), but well below the long term average. There is an additional 570 GL in Menindee Lakes (which brings total storage to about 19 % of capacity), but this remains under NSW control. Without additional Darling inflows it is not expected that there will be any further significant transfers of water from Menindee Lakes to the Murray. However in extreme dry circumstances some of the water stored in Menindee Lakes could be available to assist delivery of water to meet critical needs in the Murray in 2008-09.

SYSTEM-WIDE STRATEGY FOR 2008-09

Due to protracted water scarcity in the southern half of the Basin, Murray operations over the last two seasons have concentrated on maximizing water availability, and reducing evaporation and transmission losses along the river system. This strategy will continue until critical urban, stock and domestic requirements for 2008-09 are guaranteed.

As the irrigation season draws to a close, the operating strategy will be similar to last year and will include:

- reduced minimum flow targets,
- the use of weirpools, in particular Lake Mulwala, to supply downstream requirements, and
- continuation of wetland disconnections to reduce evaporative losses.

A significant difference from this time last year is the severe and deteriorating outlook for disconnected wetlands, and particularly for the Lower Lakes in South Australia.

Reduced minimum flows

As the irrigation season comes to an end in May 2008, reduced minimum flows will again be adopted, at least until critical water needs are guaranteed for 2008-09. Similar to last year, the release from Hume Dam will be reduced to 400 ML/day (compared to the normal winter minimum of 600 ML/day). Similarly, the normal minimum of 1 200 ML/day at Doctors Point (near Albury) will be reduced to 800 ML/day.

Normal minimum flows at Yarrawonga Weir (1 800 ML/day), and Swan Hill (0.6 m local gauge height) will also not apply. Instead, flows downstream of Yarrawonga Weir will be reduced as much as possible to minimize flows through the Sunraysia district and downstream to Lock 7 near the South Australian border.

Strategies for weir pool operation

Commencing in late April 2008, water stored in Lake Mulwala is being used to help supply downstream requirements and this has resulted in the level of the lake falling below last summer's operating range of 124.2 to 124.5 m AHD (0.4 to 0.7 m below full supply level). Under a dry scenario, the level of the lake is expected to fall to about 123.8 m AHD (1.1 m below FSL) by mid-May. The lower water level will enable inflows from the Ovens and Kiewa Rivers to be re-regulated within the lake, so that downstream releases can be maintained as far as possible within the river's channel capacity. This will minimise overbank flow during small flushes and reduce losses in the Barmah-Millewa Forest. MDBC is exploring options to further lower the lake level during winter to help control weed growth and also permit periodic maintenance of the weir. However, this decision will depend on the system-wide outlook and cannot be guaranteed.

During autumn and winter, other weir pools between Torrumbarry and Lock 7 might be partially drawn down as necessary to help supplement downstream water requirements or to capture inflow events from tributaries. In South Australia, the pool levels in Weirs 1 to 6 are expected to remain close to full supply level, to limit salinity impacts.

Wetland disconnections

During 2007 a number of wetlands along the Murray River were disconnected to help reduce evaporative losses. This strategy will remain in place until the triggers for reconnection are met, although partial refilling of some wetlands may occur to prevent acidification.

Operation of the Edward-Wakool River system

Initially, very low flows will be passed along the Edward River, and the normal minimum flows at the Edward and Gulpa offtakes will not apply. The Stevens Weir Pool level will be gradually lowered and this water will be used to supply downstream requirements along the Edward River over autumn and winter. The operation of the Edward-Wakool River system will be continually reviewed during the winter months.

Flow to South Australia

Flow to South Australia has been below normal entitlement rates for the last 20 months. A minimum of 900 GL of water is expected to be available for 2008-09, and this will increase if water availability across the upper Murray improves during the year. The monthly flow patterns will be provided by South Australia and will be continually adjusted to account for any changes in diversions or losses, and also to manage river salinity. At Morgan, salinity is currently about 400 EC compared with an average of about 350 EC at the same time last year. Below Lock 1, the salinity at Murray Bridge is about 800 EC and in Lake Alexandrina (at Milang) the salinity is about 3600 EC. Closer to the barrages, the salinity in the lake rises above 20 000 EC.

Lower Lakes

The condition of the Coorong and Lower Lakes in South Australia is grave and deteriorating. The water level in Lake Alexandrina is -0.5 m AHD (or 50 cm below mean sea level) which is well below the previous historic low of 0.1 m AHD in April 1968 (see Figure 3). There has been no discharge through the barrages to the sea since October 2006. Large areas of mudflats have been exposed in Lake Albert and there is a serious risk of acidification. Pumping of water from Lake Alexandrina commenced in early May to maintain Lake Albert at its current level and prevent further exposure of sulfidic sediments. Cooler weather will also result in reduced evaporation in the Lower Lakes leading to a temporary stabilization of water levels over the winter months. Further management options for the Lower Lakes will be carefully considered during the 2008-09 season, responding to actual lake levels and system inflows.

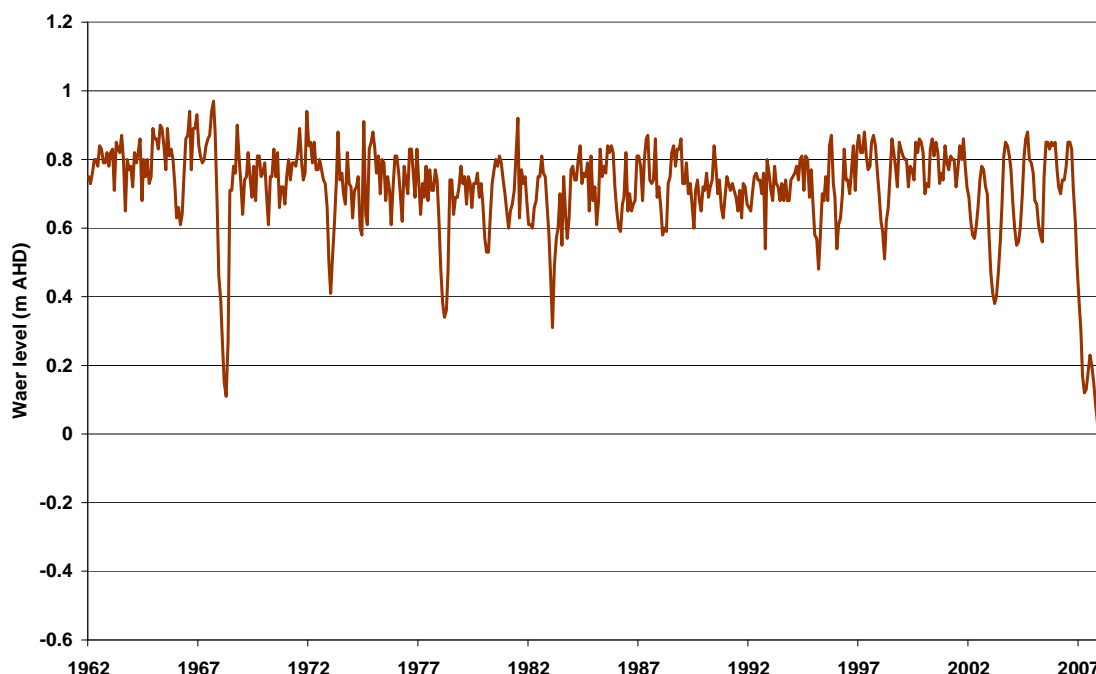


Figure 3. Lake Alexandrina water level, 1962-2008 (Full Supply Level = 0.75 m AHD).



Figure 4. Due to the historically low water levels below Lock 1 and in the Lower Lakes, some of the adjacent land is drying out for the first time in more than 50 years, resulting in cracking and subsidence.

Asset works and management activities

There are several important management activities planned across the system, and these will need to be coordinated with river operations. These include; removal of Mildura Weir for trestle replacement, Lock chamber maintenance at Locks 5 and 10 (resulting in closure of the river for passage through the locks for the duration of the works), gate maintenance at the Lake Victoria inlet regulator, and weed management in Lake Mulwala. MDBC will issue specific media releases regarding these activities throughout the coming months.

THE ENVIRONMENT

In response to significant regional rainfall and river flows out of the Condamine-Balonne catchment in Queensland, a major colonial waterbird breeding event commenced in the Narran Lake Nature Reserve in January 2008. This was the first such event in this wetland since 1999/2000 and the most significant in the Murray-Darling Basin since the mid-1990s. To maximize ecological outcomes of this event, the Murray-Darling Basin Commission purchased 11 GL of water to supplement the inflow to the system. Nest counts indicate in excess of 70,000 breeding pairs of mainly Straw-necked Ibis. An estimated 80,000 chicks have been raised successfully to date, in part due to the environmental flows. The Narran Lakes are now supporting many other species of waterbirds, in particular thousands of ducks. The watering was also contributing to the health of other organisms, including a variety of plant species, invertebrates, frogs and fish.

Further west, flooding in the Paroo and Warrego River systems filled a large number of wetlands and lakes and this has stimulated breeding colonies of waterbird species, including Pelicans, Great Cormorants, Pied Cormorants, Darters, Yellow-billed Spoonbill and Straw-necked Ibis.

In the southern half of the Basin the prolonged and severe drought continues to impact on the floodplain ecosystems along the Murray River. The latest studies show that about 70% of River Red Gums along the Victorian side of the Murray River are declining or dead. In response, small volumes of environmental water have been made available for high priority actions, in particular to replenish critical drought refuges and protect threatened species. Most recently, the Murray-Darling Basin Commission and the Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) are providing a small amount of environmental water (17 GL) for critical drought refuges and stressed River Red Gums. This will include the Gunbower Wetlands

and Little Lake Boort near Echuca, the Lindsay-Walpolla icon site in the Mallee, and the Reedy, Kinnaird, Black and Moodies swamps near Shepparton.

Also, 0.6 GL of Living Murray water will be provided by the Murray-Darling Basin Commission, together with an additional 0.2 GL from Banrock Station, to partially refill the Ramsar listed Banrock Station Wetland in South Australia's Riverland. This will prevent potentially irreversible damage from increasing salinity and protect critical plant and animal habitats.

The partner governments of the Murray-Darling Basin will continue to work cooperatively to manage the water available for environmental use.



Figure 5. Straw-necked Ibis chicks at Narran Lakes Nature Reserve. Photo, Dr Kate Brandis, University of NSW

OUTLOOK FOR 2008-09

Analysis of 116 years of inflow data shows a very strong correlation between dry autumns and continuing dry conditions for the following year. If inflows remain low through May, there is an increased likelihood of dry conditions persisting through winter and spring. The protracted nature of this current drought and the consistent above average temperatures have dried out catchments and reduced base flows from groundwater systems to rivers. It can be expected, therefore, that even with average rainfall in 2008-09, inflows could remain well below average. Full recovery of the system would take several years of above average rainfall.

There is also growing evidence that lower rainfall and reduced runoff in south-eastern Australia is linked to global warming. Figure 6 indicates that a large proportion of the decline in rainfall during the last 10 years has occurred in the months of March, April and May.

Whilst critical urban, stock and domestic requirements for 2008-09 are reasonably assured (but not yet guaranteed), opening water allocations for Murray irrigators in 2008-09 are again expected to be very low or zero, although some carryover water is likely to be available. Critical human needs for 2008-09 can be met for urban water users taking water supplies from the main stem of the Murray provided inflows are no worse than the record lows in 2006-07.

In this 'worst case' scenario some additional contingency measures beyond those used this year would be needed, involving Menindee Lakes, the tributaries, Lake Mulwala and other in-river storages. The outlook for urban and stock & domestic users who take their water from anabranches, canals or channels will remain uncertain until there are significant inflows in excess of those assumed in the 'worst case' planning.

Allocation improvements during the season will be dependent on rainfall and inflows over winter and spring, which is the critical period for runoff in the high yielding catchments of the upper Murray, Mitta Mitta, Kiewa and Ovens Rivers. The very low system storage also presents very serious challenges for the environment in 2008-09.

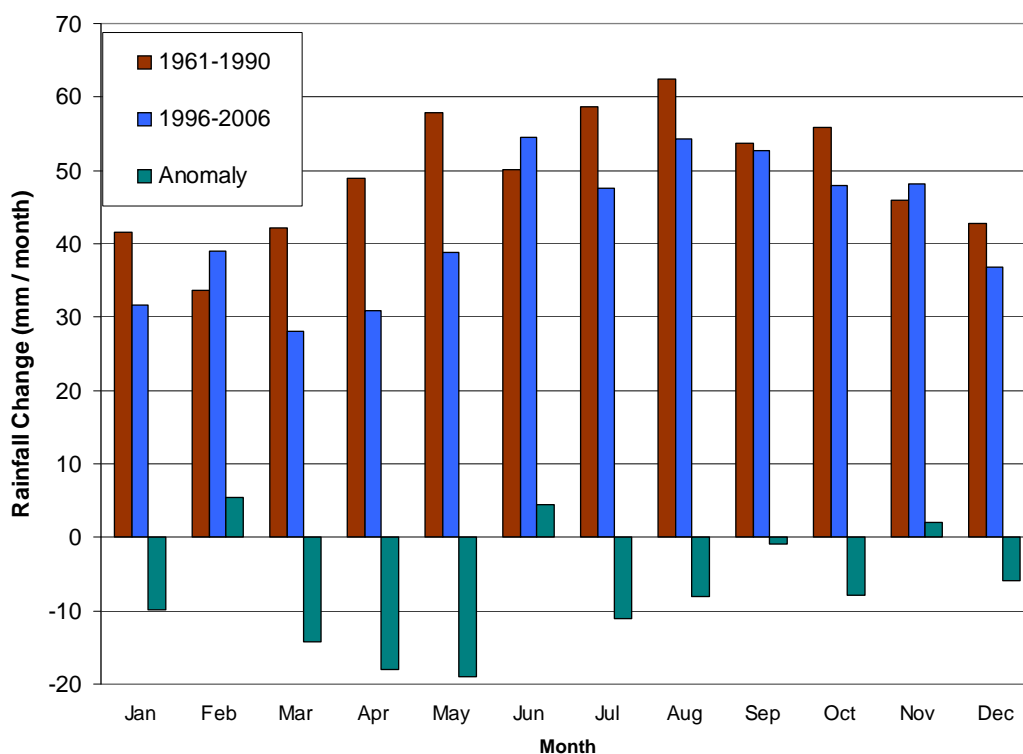


Figure 6. Change in rainfall in south-eastern Australia, 1961-1990 versus 1996-2006. (Courtesy of B Timbal, Bureau of Meteorology)

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

MDBC will provide further drought updates in the coming months. Additional information is available at www.mdbc.gov.au also from the relevant Australian and State Government Agencies. For media interviews with MDBC personnel, please contact Sam Leone, MDBC Media Liaison, telephone 0407 006 332.