

New South Wales – Murray Alluvium

Formal submission submitted to the MDBA: 9 April 2019

Disclaimer: *New South Wales (NSW) formally submitted the proposed Murray Alluvium water resource plan (proposed WRP) package to the Murray–Darling Basin Authority (the MDBA) under the Water Act 2007 (Cth). At the time of publication, a recommendation on accreditation has not yet been made by the MDBA to the Commonwealth Minister responsible for water. The proposed WRP is not operational. The publication of the proposed WRP on the MDBA’s website is to enable transparency.*



The Murray Alluvium WRP area (GW8) is located within the Murray and Murrumbidgee catchments that form part of the Basin in southern NSW. It covers an area of about 19,200 km² and represents about 2% of the Murray–Darling Basin. The Murray Alluvium WRP area covers groundwater within alluvial deposits of the River Murray from the Hume Dam, upstream of Albury, to approximately 15 km west of Kyalite and the alluvium along Billabong Creek between Little Billabong and Rand. The Billabong Creek Alluvium continues to the northern boundary of the Lower Murray Alluvium near its junction with the Edward River near Moulamein. The Upper Murray Alluvium is made up of the valley infill alluvial sediments associated with the River Murray between Hume Dam and Corowa.

Water resources: The WRP area applies only to the alluvial water resources and groundwater in the area and encompasses four SDL resource units the Lower Murray Deep Alluvium, the Upper Murray Alluvium, the Billabong Creek Alluvium, and the Lower Murray Shallow Alluvium.

Towns and regions: Include Wakool, Finley, Swan Hill, Jerilderie, Deniliquin, Corowa.

Water users: Irrigation, industry, local water utilities, and stock, as well as dryland farming.

For more detailed maps, including the boundaries of water resource plan areas as defined by the Basin Plan and the names of the Traditional Owners within each area (noting there is a degree of overlap between some WRP areas and Nation boundaries) please visit this website:

<https://www.mdba.gov.au/publications/maps-spatial-data>

About water resource plans

Water resource plans are an integral part of implementing the Basin Plan. They set new rules on how much water can be taken from the system, ensuring the sustainable diversion limit is not exceeded over time.

Basin state governments are developing water resource plans. The Murray–Darling Basin Authority is working closely with Basin state governments to ensure water resource plans meet the requirements of the Basin Plan.

There are 33 water resource plans in total, covering groundwater and surface water management across the Basin. Water resource plans to be completed by states include:

- twenty in New South Wales
- five in Victoria
- three in Queensland
- three in South Australia, and
- two in the Australian Capital Territory.

Next steps

The MDBA is currently assessing the Murray Alluvium WRP for consistency with the Basin Plan.

The Authority will then consider the assessment and provide a recommendation to the Commonwealth Minister responsible for water that will inform the decision regarding accreditation.



For more information on water resource plans, visit: www.mdba.gov.au/water-resource-plans

For more information on the Murray Alluvium water resource plan, visit <https://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/plans-programs/water-resource-plans/drafts>

Acknowledgement of the Traditional Owners – *In the spirit of strengthening partnerships with Aboriginal people the MDBA acknowledges the cultural authority of the Traditional Owners in the Murray–Darling Basin.*

How the WRP was developed

New South Wales (NSW) has been developing this WRP since 2017 with the first draft received by the MDBA in 2019.

This WRP brings together new and existing rules and arrangements used by NSW to manage alluvial groundwater in the Murray Alluvium WRP area. This included creating the *Water Sharing Plan for the Murray Alluvial Groundwater Sources 2020*. This new Water Sharing Plan establishes the rules for the water sharing in the Murray Alluvial SDL resource units, replacing the previous *Water Sharing Plan for Lower Murray Groundwater Source 2019* and the *Water Sharing Plan for Lower Murray Shallow Groundwater Source 2012*, and the relevant provisions contained in the *Water Sharing Plan for the Lower Murray Unregulated and Alluvial Water Sources 2011* and the *Water Sharing Plan for the Murrumbidgee Unregulated and Alluvial Water Sources 2012*.

Public consultation informed the development of the state plan, and that consultation underpins the WRP. The NSW Government has worked with the relevant Traditional Owners to identify their objectives and outcomes for water resource management to help improve the protection of Aboriginal values and uses in the WRP area.

In assessing the WRP, the MDBA will also seek advice from the Murray Lower Darling River Indigenous Nations (MLDRIN).

Regional details

The River Murray flows in a westerly direction through the Upper Murray Alluvium entering the flat plains near Corowa and into the Lower Murray Alluvium. It flows out of the Murray Alluvium WRP Area west of the junction of the Murray and Wakool rivers. Agriculture including grazing, dryland cropping, and irrigation, is the dominant land use along the River Murray downstream of Hume Dam, accounting for around 90 % of the land area.

The Murray alluvium supports significant Groundwater Dependent Ecosystems of high ecological value including wetlands, vegetation and base flow ecosystems. The very high values in the WRP area are due to the extent of internationally significant Ramsar wetlands and those listed under the Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia, which support habitat for many threatened species.

Addressing risks

The NSW approach to managing water resources requires the identification and assessment of risks to the condition and ongoing availability of water resources and the assessment of existing management strategies and the need for new management strategies. The WRP risk assessment outlines the risks and management strategies in the Murray Alluvium WRP area.

In assessing the WRP, the MDBA will consider the risk management arrangements NSW has put forward for accreditation to protect the water resources of the WRP area, including other water resources with significant hydrological connections to the Murray Alluvium WRP area water sources. For more information about these risks visit: <https://www.mdba.gov.au/basin-plan-roll-out/water-resource-plans/common-challenges-across-water-resource-plans>

Water for the environment must be protected in law to at least the same level as was in place prior to the commencement of the Basin Plan in 2012. The MDBA's assessment will ensure the WRP does not reduce the net level of protection of water for the environment that was available at that time.

Further information

WRPs complement existing arrangements for water use at the state level. More information about these arrangements can be found at the links below:

Murray Alluvium WRP Schedule A - Water Sharing Plan for the Murray Alluvial Groundwater Sources 2020

Water Management Act 2000:

<https://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/#/view/act/2000/92>

Water Security for Regions Program:

<https://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/plans-programs/infrastructure-programs/water-security-for-regions>

Office locations

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