

Report card for the Murray Below Mulwala Water Source

Report card 10 of 15

Water source context

Water sharing plan:	Murray Unregulated River Water Sources 2024
Area:	13,047 km ²
Inflowing water source:	None, except overbank flows (during floods) from the regulated NSW Murray system, which has rivers and streams throughout this unregulated water source
Receiving water source:	Regulated NSW Murray
Approximate average annual rainfall:	400 mm (Deniliquin)

River flows

Flow records:	None on unregulated streams
Stream type:	Ephemeral, losing

Basic landholder rights

Domestic and stock rights estimate:	7 ML/year
Native title rights:	0 ML/year

Licensed water entitlements

Total surface water entitlement:	355 ML/year (22 licences) for Domestic and Stock access licences. 27,377 ML/year (78 licences) for Unregulated River access licences
Local water utilities entitlement:	None

Rules

Table 1. Access rules

Type	Current rules	Proposed rules
Cease-to-pump	Take is not permitted when there is flow less than full flow through a 200 mm pipe* at the pump site.	No change
Take from in-river pools	Take is not permitted when the in-river pool is below full containment volume.	No change
Take from in-river dam pools	Take is not permitted unless it is consistent with the water supply work approval.	No change
Take from off-river pools	Take is not permitted when the off-river pool is below 80% of full containment volume.	No change
Exemptions	Some exemptions apply to specific access rules for the water source, including for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and hygiene • Domestic use • Take from a run-off harvesting dam • Specific licences listed in Schedule 2 of the plan. 	No change

* This flow is equivalent to around 0.5 ML/day.

Table 2. Rules for constructing surface water supply works

Type	Current rules	Proposed rules
In-river dams	Permitted	On third and higher order streams, applications for in-river dams for Town Water Supply only are permitted.
Protection for wetlands	n/a	No new or amended works permitted into or within 3 km upstream of a Ramsar wetland. No new or amended works permitted within significant wetlands listed in Schedule 4 of the draft plan unless there will be no more than minimal harm to the wetland concerned. This rule does not apply to replacement works.

Table 1. Trading (dealing) rules

Type	Current rules	Proposed rules
Into water source	Not permitted	No change
Within water source	Permitted, subject to assessment	No change
Interstate trade	Not permitted	No change
Protection for wetlands	n/a	Not permitted into or within 3 km upstream of a Ramsar wetland. Not permitted into significant wetlands listed in Schedule 4 of the draft Plan.

Trading covers:

- assignment of rights dealings (trading of a licence)
- share component dealings between water sources (trading of entitlement between water sources)
- water allocation dealings (trading an annual allocation)
- water supply works dealings (relocation of an extraction point).

Key factors for decisions

- The risk assessment indicated that flows in the water source are at low risk from extraction and that this water has high in-stream value.
- This water source is located on the floodplain below Lake Mulwala and is intersected by multiple rivers, streams and channels of the regulated River Murray System.
- The water source covers almost two-thirds of the entire water sharing plan area and has almost two-thirds of all entitlement.

Access Rules

- There are no gauges on the unregulated streams in the water source and multiple discrete creeks and lagoons. A review determined that the current access rules should be retained.

Trading

- Trading is currently not permitted into the water source. The risk assessment determined that the water source has high in-stream value and so the prohibition on trade into the water source will be retained. Trade may occur within the water source, subject to assessment.

In-river dams

- Applications for in-river dams are currently permitted on both small and large streams. The risk assessment determined that the water source has high in-stream value and so a prohibition on applications for new in-river dams on third and higher order streams is proposed.

Town Water Supply

- To maintain high in-stream values of this water source the department plans to prohibit in-river dams in 3rd order streams and above. NB. 'Stream order' is used to describe the hierarchy of streams from the top to the bottom of a catchment.
- It is proposed to include an exemption for in-river dam applications which are for town water supply purposes. This provides an opportunity for inland towns to consider in-river dams as an option to improve security, reliability and resilience of town water supplies. This is consistent with the State Water Strategy priority actions for town water supply.
- It should be noted applications for in-river dams are subject to a stringent assessment process that considers case-by-case the location and impact of the works being applied for. There is no guarantee an application will be approved as this is determined by the assessment process.

Improving protection of wetlands

- The NRC have recommended the replacement plan provide better protection for significant wetlands. DPE Water have developed criteria to identify significant wetlands in the plan area. It is proposed to include rules to improve their protection by prohibiting new water supply works and restricting trades into or upstream of these areas. The prohibition of new works will not apply to replacement works.
- Wetlands identified for improved protection were drawn from multiple datasets including the Long-Term Water Plan, Floodplain Management Plan, Ramsar listing, Directory of Important Wetlands of Australia and Endangered Ecological Communities.
- The significant wetlands identified for this plan are listed in schedule 4 of the draft plan.
- More information on improving protection of wetlands is available in the fact sheet.

Other key rules – no change proposed

Managing access licences

Each water access licence has its own share component (volume of the licence) and a water allocation account, where water is credited or debited.

- Water is credited to an account by an available water determination or if water is traded in (purchased) during the year from another licence holder.
- Water is debited from the account when water is extracted from a water source or traded out (sold). Total extraction from a work (pump, diversion channel, etc.) will be measured through metering or logbooks.

Carryover and individual account limits

For domestic and stock and unregulated river access licence accounts, carryover of water remaining in an account at the end of each water year is permitted up to 1 ML per unit share or 100 % of the share component (where expressed in ML).

For domestic and stock and unregulated river access licences, the maximum water account debit in any 3 consecutive water years is:

- the volume of water allocated to the account over those 3 years from available water determinations, plus
- any adjustments made for allocation assignments (trades) or water allocation re-credited into the account.

Rules for granting access licences

There are limited purposes for which a new licence will be granted. We anticipate that users who need more water will source it from the market. One reason a licence may be granted is for Aboriginal cultural purposes. Aboriginal Cultural Access Licences are permitted to be granted up to a maximum volume of 10 ML/year per licence, subject to assessment.

Other reasons are identified in Section 10 of the *Water Management (General) Regulation 2018*.

Public exhibition

The Department of Planning and Environment seeks feedback from the public on the suitability of the proposed rules for this water source.

In particular, we seek your feedback on:

- **prohibition on applications for new in-river dams on third and higher order streams**
- **proposed trade rules**
- **proposed rules to protect significant wetlands including prohibiting new water supply works and trades within or near significant wetlands.**

A submission form is available on the department's website.

To read the draft *Water Sharing Plan for the Murray Unregulated River Water Sources 2024* and supporting fact sheets, please visit the department's [Public Exhibition website](#).