

Community update on response to fish deaths in Menindee and Lower Darling-Baaka

Dissolved oxygen levels in the Menindee weir pool

The dissolved oxygen levels in the Menindee weir pool remain at good levels for fish health. Our series of in-river buoys installed between Lake Pamamaroo and Weir 32 provide 'real-time' enhanced water quality data and show that the dissolved oxygen is well within the healthy range.

Fish deaths on 10 and 11 February

The NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) Fisheries is aware of the fish death event which has been reported in the Darling-Baaka River, through the town weir pool upstream of Weir 32. It is estimated that tens of Golden Perch are dead, with reports of hundreds of further fish struggling at the surface. To date it appears only Golden Perch are affected.

As DO readings are good, it is not believed that a lack of oxygen is a contributing factor.

Regardless of the good DO readings, we have taken precautions and released a pulse flow of 1500M/L (1450M/L from Lake Pamamaroo and 50M/L from Menindee) which commenced on the evening of 10 February 2024 for 24 hours.

Initial assessments suggest the fish are being impacted by *lernaea*, a parasitic anchor worm that can increase in numbers during warmer, summer conditions. Impacted fish usually exhibit red ulcerations on their bodies and around their gills. Significant infestations can contribute to the death of impacted fish but without the testing being completed we cannot definitely confirm the cause of death.

Samples of affected fish have been collected and are in the process of being transported to NSW DPI laboratories for more detailed assessment.

Lernaea are not harmful to humans, however the NSW Food Authority advice on ulcerated fish indicates that mildly affected fish are safe for human consumption, but heavily ulcerated fish should not be consumed due to the potential presences of unknown pathogens.

Please always remember to report any fish death incidents or observations to the Fishers Watch Phonenumber on 1800 043 536 or fill in a fish kill protocol and report form at: <https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/habitat/threats/fish-kills-2019-2020/info-sheet>

Ongoing management of water quality

The eight water pulses released between 10 November 2023 and 23 January 2024 have successfully improved dissolved oxygen throughout the water column and supported fish health.

NSW Government and Commonwealth agencies are continuing to carefully monitor the situation and adjusting releases as required.

With the changes in releases, you may notice an increase in the level of the weir pools. Given the dynamic nature of the current dissolved oxygen conditions, we have not been able to provide 3 days' notice of any changes to flow rates.

Emergency Operations Centre notified and ready to act

The Emergency Operations Centre led by NSW Police have been notified and they are on standby should a mass fish death event occur. A contractor has been stood up to be available to remove dead fish from the river as soon as possible if a mass fish death event were to occur in the reach.

Additional information

- To notify the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water of potential blackwater events email: waterqualitydata@dpie.nsw.gov.au
- To view community updates issued, visit [Community updates and frequently asked questions | Water \(nsw.gov.au\)](#)
- To report dead fish, fish struggling or gasping at the water surface, or crayfish leaving the water please call the NSW DPI Fisheries Phoneline 1800 043 536 or fill in a fish kill protocol and report form at: <https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/habitat/threats/fish-kills-2019-2020/info-sheet>
- Information on recent fish deaths is available at: [Fish kills in NSW](#). When reporting, please include the name of the river/waterbody, location and date of your observation and provide photographs. If possible, please also record what species are affected and an estimate of number of each species observed.
- Further information on blackwater events can be found at the DCCEEW Water website at: [Hypoxic blackwater | Water \(nsw.gov.au\)](#)
- Additional information is also available on the Murray-Darling Basin Authority website at: <https://www.mdba.gov.au/publications/mdba-reports/water-management-101-factsheets>
- Operational updates are available at: [WaterInsights - WaterNSW](#)
- Water quality data collected after the fish deaths at Menindee is available on the Environment Protection Authority web page at: <https://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/working-together/community-engagement/updates-on-issues/menindee-fish-kill>