

Floodplain harvesting reform — addressing community concerns



Healthy Floodplains Project



August 2021

We are taking action to address public and stakeholder feedback



There has been extensive public and stakeholder consultation about the implementation of the NSW Floodplain Harvesting Policy. We have heard your feedback and we are taking action to address it.

Demonstrating the validity of our river system models

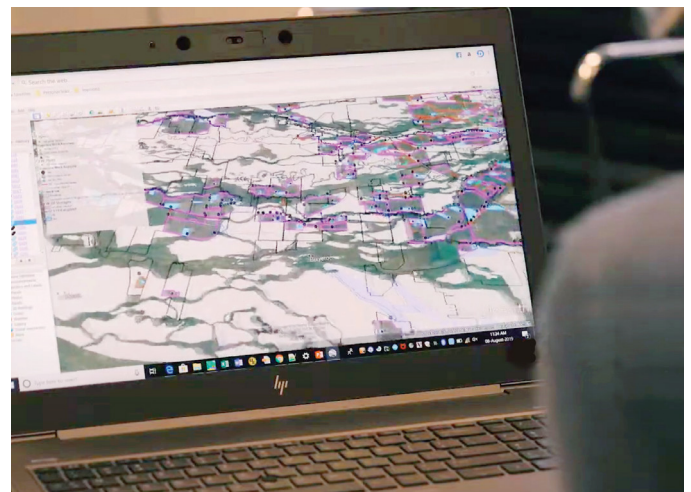
We have invested over \$15m in data and information to upgrade existing modelling and develop new river system models so that they better reflect current and historic floodplain harvesting. An independent review of this work has been undertaken for the NSW Border Rivers, Gwydir and Macquarie valleys and this review is continuing for the Namoi and Barwon-Darling valleys. For the Gwydir, Macquarie and Barwon-Darling valleys, the upgraded models are based on previously accredited models, used for 'Cap' auditing purposes. In contrast, the models for the NSW Border Rivers and the Namoi valleys have been entirely rebuilt in the new eWater SOURCE model platform. The NSW Border Rivers model was jointly developed with Queensland, subjected to several technical reviews and has recently been adopted in Queensland Water Resource Plans, however the Namoi model has not yet been subjected to this level of independent technical assessment and review.

To address stakeholder concerns with the validity of our river system models we have designed an

enhanced stakeholder and peer review process for the Namoi model that will commence in September 2021.

The objectives of the enhanced review process are to:

- Provide key stakeholders the opportunity to be directly involved in reviewing the model
- Explain all aspects of the model in detail
- Increase transparency of modelling methods and water management decision-making.



River system modelling

The final format of the review process will be confirmed with stakeholders closer to the date but reporting will be consistent with the structure used for the NSW Border Rivers, Gwydir, Macquarie and Barwon-Darling model build reports. If this external review process is successful, we will adopt it for all major model builds in the future.

The model review will include a broad range of stakeholders including:



Improving connectivity between river systems

We recognise that connectivity between river systems across the entire Basin is important for the continued health of the environment and our communities. We are working to examine policy, planning and infrastructure options that improve connectivity in the northern Basin, focussing on water for critical human and environmental needs.

- Connectivity will be a key focus of the Western Regional Water Strategy that will be released in late 2021 for public comment.
- A connectivity stakeholder reference group will be convened as an advisory body in late 2021 to provide feedback on options to improve connectivity. The group will have representatives from water user groups, conservation groups, Aboriginal representatives and local government. This group will not replace public consultation.

We are seeking to bring priority unapproved flood works into compliance

Changing legislative requirements over the past 40 years has resulted in there now being many unapproved floodworks across the designated floodplains areas of NSW. Floodplain Management Plans have been developed for the floodplains in the northern Basin under the Healthy Floodplains Project to complement implementation of the NSW Floodplain Harvesting Policy. These plans ensure that landholders can build flood works to protect their life and property, if this does not come at the expense of flood-dependent environmental and cultural assets. Flood works that are inconsistent with these floodplain management plans will require modification or removal.

Restoring flood-flow connections by removing or modifying high priority unapproved floodworks is crucial and has been identified as a regulatory priority by the Natural Resources Access Regulator.

A business case has been submitted to the Commonwealth Government for approximately \$10.2 million to deliver an accelerated compliance program targeting unapproved flood works in the northern Basin.

If successful, this program will restore floodplain connectivity across 110 priority areas in the northern Basin by 2024. The environment and a broad range of stakeholders will benefit from this program including dryland farmers, graziers and First Nations peoples.



Water flowing downstream

© State of New South Wales through Department of Planning, Industry and Environment 2021. Information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (August 2021) and is subject to change. For more information, please visit dpie.nsw.gov.au/copyright