



Stakeholder notification 2 – 26th June 2017

River fresh (water delivery) event

July 2017 - Murrumbidgee & Yanco Creek systems

Information for landholders, local councils, recreational river users and other stakeholders along the Murrumbidgee River and Yanco Creek systems regarding a plan to deliver a low level 'river fresh' during Winter 2017.

What is this 'river fresh' flow?

It is a temporary increase in river level due to a higher flow rate that will sit well within the river channel.

Why is it being done?

To improve the health of wetlands along the mid-Murrumbidgee river.

When connected to the river these wetlands provide critical breeding and foraging habitat for native fish, waterbirds, frogs and other fauna. They support native wetland plants which help to improve water quality and help to produce zooplankton, insects and crustaceans which are important food for juvenile fish. This water delivery will also help to move nutrients and carbon back into the river during winter when the water is cooler, supporting the river food web.

During the drought years (2002-2010), hundreds of wetlands along the Murrumbidgee River that normally connect to the river remained dry. These wetlands suffered and are in need of more regular inundation to help them recover.

Most of these wetlands connected during Spring 2016 floods but have since dried out or water levels have dropped to low levels. Monitoring of these sites indicate that many contain native fish including golden perch as well as young long- and short-necked turtles. This flow will help to reconnect these wetlands, improve their vegetation characteristics and will allow for native fauna and fish movement back into the river.

Whose water is it?

Water allocation is being made available by the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder and from NSW environmental water allowances.

How much water will be released and for how long?

The planned total volume is up to 200 gigalitres (GL). The total duration of dam releases for the event is expected to be 17 days.

The actual volume released will depend on allocation levels for 2017/18 water year and operational conditions, including season and local inflow status. Depending on these conditions, the duration of the peak flow is planned to be 5-6 days in the upstream river reaches, increasing to 12 days further downstream, **as indicated in Table 1.**

Releases would be planned for low base flow periods (minimum required flows in the river) and when little to no rainfall is forecast.

What river level is the flow expected to reach?

The environmental water releases are **targeted to reach a river level of 3.7m (or 20,000 ML/d) at Wagga Wagga. This is far below the minor flood level of 7.3m** and slightly below peak irrigation season water levels of summer 2013.

A flow height of 3.7m is known to be of minimal inconvenience to river stakeholders. If heavy rainfall is unexpectedly predicted after the planned release of environmental water, river operation will be managed accordingly. The event may be postponed or immediately ceased, so as to minimise the chances of exceeding the target river levels.

The flow recession will be gradual (modelled natural rate of recession) with the aim of minimising river bank erosion.

When will it happen?

Due to high late season irrigation demand and ongoing maintenance works at Berembed Weir this event has been delayed from an earlier May/June plan.

The water delivery is scheduled to **commence in mid July 2017**. Expected travel times and indicative river levels for Gundagai, Wagga and downstream locations are shown in **Table 1** below.

Stakeholders will be notified (via email and SMS) once the commencement of water delivery has been confirmed.

If this water delivery event is cancelled, stakeholders will also be notified as soon as this decision is made.

Will it affect me?

If you have land or infrastructure (eg. pumps) that are normally affected by rising Murrumbidgee River levels then there is a possibility that you could be affected. As the proposed release is well below the minor flood level, effects are expected to be minimal.

See **Table 1** for predicted river heights at specific gauge locations.

OEH has consulted with neighbouring landholders to identify and address potential effects of these flows.

OEH and partner agencies will continue to work with landholders to address their concerns about the effects of river flows.

If you think you may be affected by this proposed flow event please contact OEH as soon as possible.

Landholders who lease areas of their floodplain property should forward this information on to lessees.

Who is responsible for the event?

OEH manages and plans environmental water allocations in NSW and is the lead agency for planning this environmental flow event. Water NSW manages water orders, deliveries and operates the river for all water users.

Partnering agencies include Water NSW, DPI Water, Riverina Local Land Services (RLLS) and the Commonwealth Environmental Water Office (CEWO).

How will I be notified if this planned flow is occurring?

OEH staff will manage the *pre-event* communications and Water NSW will take over during the *water release* phase. Communication will continue for the duration of the event through the provision of regular event updates to website (Link below), local media and contact lists, or via direct calls with OEH.

Together we will provide regular communication updates to:

Landholders/managers

Landholders or stakeholders who wish to be kept informed of the planning and delivery of this environmental water should *contact us as soon as possible* – see below.

Local councils – to ensure infrastructure such as roads or drainage systems are being monitored.

Project partners – to ensure all partners are aware of the details of the proposed event and that potential risks are identified and managed within a risk management strategy.

SES – will be notified by OEH prior to any releases as a courtesy and preventative measure. However, as the proposed flow (3.7m) is **below** the minor flood level (7.3m) at Wagga, it is not anticipated that the SES will be involved in flow-related operations.

Public information – OEH updates will be issued to local newspapers and radio stations to inform the wider Murrumbidgee community of the environmental water release and the objectives of the flow. Regular event updates will be posted on the OEH website at:

<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/environmentalwater/murrumbidgee-news.htm>

Where do I get more information?

If you would like to be informed via SMS or email on progress of planning and implementation of the proposed Murrumbidgee ‘river fresh’ flow then please send an email to:

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Table 1. Predicted river heights for proposed 2017 Murrumbidgee River Fresh event

Location	Height (m)	Discharge (ML)	Peak Duration (days)	Travel time from Burrinjuck
Gundagai	3.6 to 3.9 ¹	17,400 to 20,000	5-6	1.5 days
Wagga	3.4 -3.7 ²	18,000 -20,000	5-6	2 days
Narrandera	4.5-4.8	16,300-19,000	5-6	5 days
Yanco Creek Offtake	3.0 to 3.3	1,300 to 1,600 ³	6-7	6 days
Yanco Creek @ Morundah	2.1 to 2.2	800-900	6-7	7 days
Collombo Creek @ Morundah	1.6 to 1.8	500-600	6-7	7 days
Darlington Point	4.2 to 4.5	14,400 to 16,400	6-7	7 days
Carrathool	4.2 to 4.5	12,000 to 13,400	7-8	10 days
D/S Hay Weir	5.0 to 5.3	11,500 to 12,700	8-9	12 days
D/S Maude Weir	4.8 to 5.1	10,200 to 11,200	9-10	13 days
D/S Redbank Weir	5.3 to 5.6	8,190 to 9,070	9-10	15 days
D/S Balranald Weir	5.1 to 5.4	6,630 to 7,560	10-12	18 days

¹ similar to maximum irrigation flow levels in full allocation years

² lower than any previous environmental flow event

³ the current DPI Water approval specifies environmental flow levels up to 2,600ML/day at the Yanco Creek Offtake (YCO), however with the proposed low target level at Wagga, the predicted peak YCO flow is unlikely to exceed 1,600ML/day.

Note: The actual river heights and flow durations may vary slightly from the above estimates as a result of 'other river operations' which are not related to the delivery of this environmental water event – these may include *base irrigation demand and weir pool levels*.