



Critical water planning for the Murray Valley

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Current water availability

The drought through out inland NSW is continuing with very little rainfall in the last month across the Murray Valley. From 12 May to 11 June, Corryong had 30.5 millimetres (mm) of rain, Albury 29.4 mm, Deniliquin 23.2 mm and Mildura 14.6 mm. This is only 40 to 60 per cent of the long term average for May.

The catchment is extremely dry and there has been virtually no runoff. Inflows into Murray River storages between March and May have been equal to the lowest on record. Flows in all parts of the Murray Basin are now extremely low or have ceased. Similarly, inflows into the Snowy Mountain storages remain extremely low and are close to the record low levels observed at this time last year.

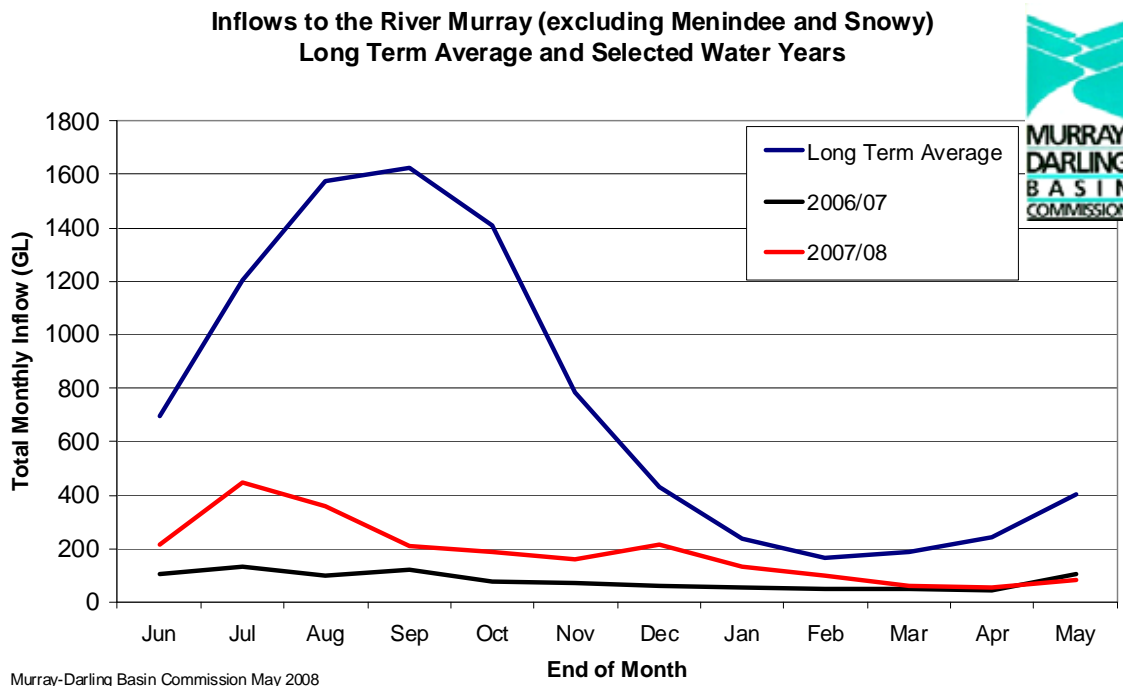
Storage levels as at 11 June 2008

Storage @ 11 June 2008	Volume GL	Percent of capacity	Change in Volume 13 May 2008 to 11 June 2008 GL	Volume at this time last year
Hume Dam	425	14	+126	291 (10%)
Dartmouth Dam	688	17	+6	493 (13%)
Lake Victoria	277	40	+7	250 (37%)
Menindee Lakes Storage	550	32	-16	97 (6%)
Total volume	1939		+123	1131

While there is significantly more water in storage now than at this time last year, much of this is held in individual accounts as carryover, or is water that has been pre-released by Snowy Hydro and is water that would otherwise have been released in 2009/10. The majority of the inflow into Hume Dam over the past month is a result of this Snowy Hydro pre-release.

There is also a significant volume of Murray water stored in the Murrumbidgee and Goulburn River storages as 2007/08 inter-valley transfers that will be transferred downstream during the coming year.

This graph shows the long term average inflows into the Murray River:



This graph shows the natural inflows into the Murray River over the past two years compared with the long term average. Inflows during May have been less than that recorded in 2007.

What this means

While Murray Valley storage volumes are better than at this time last year, without above average winter and spring rain, water availability in 2008/09 will once again be extremely low. However, the New South Wales Murray Valley is in a better position than it was at this time last year.

There is approximately 150 GL of carryover in NSW Murray Valley licence accounts, approximately 270 GL in the Murrumbidgee and approximately 230 GL in Victorian and South Australian accounts. In addition to this, NSW Murray Valley also has 75 GL available to provide critical human supplies.

While the drought is far from over, it is not intended to implement the Critical Water Program in 2008/09 because of the substantial carryover volumes available – it is expected that much of this will also be available on the annual trade market.

Ensuring water delivery

New South Wales has reserved water in Menindee Lakes to ensure that water for critical human needs and carryover can be delivered when required in 2008/09.

There is still insufficient water available to New South Wales to divert into the Wakool River and creek systems downstream of Deniliquin, similarly there is not enough water currently available to provide stock and domestic supplies throughout all of the Murray Irrigation Ltd system, but will be limited to the main channels similar to the situation last year.

The first improvements in water availability will be used to secure domestic and stock requirements and to provide sufficient high security allocations to ensure permanent plantings survive. If tributary inflows occur that provide surplus water, priority will be given to diverting this into the Wakool River and creek systems.

Repayment of critical water

There are a number of licences with unreconciled accounts as a result of the critical water allocations made in 2007. Balancing (repayment) these outstanding accounts will commence when high security allocations reach 50 per cent. For critical industry users, repayment will commence at 80 per cent. This means that these licences will receive normal allocation credits until these allocation levels are reached.

Management of the Menindee Lakes

Releases have been reduced to minimum levels to conserve as much water as possible for 2008/09. Water in the Menindee Lakes will be used to ensure the delivery of carryover and domestic and stock water in the Murray and will be released into the Murray later in the year if water supplies are still critically low at this time.

Town water supply

Because water availability remains low, the allocation for town water supply on 1 July 2008 is likely to commence at 50 per cent of entitlement. Water restrictions within towns and for domestic purposes will continue in 2008/09 unless water availability increases significantly.

Looking to 2009/10

The Department is currently struggling to provide water for anything other than domestic supply and carryover. It is important that water that flows into the Murray system during the year is reserved to meet critical human needs for 2009/10. The Senior Officers Group (SOG), established by Prime Minister and Premiers in 2006, is currently considering options for the year.

Trade

All trade in the Murray Valley **ceased** on 30 April 2008. Trading will recommence on 1 July 2008.

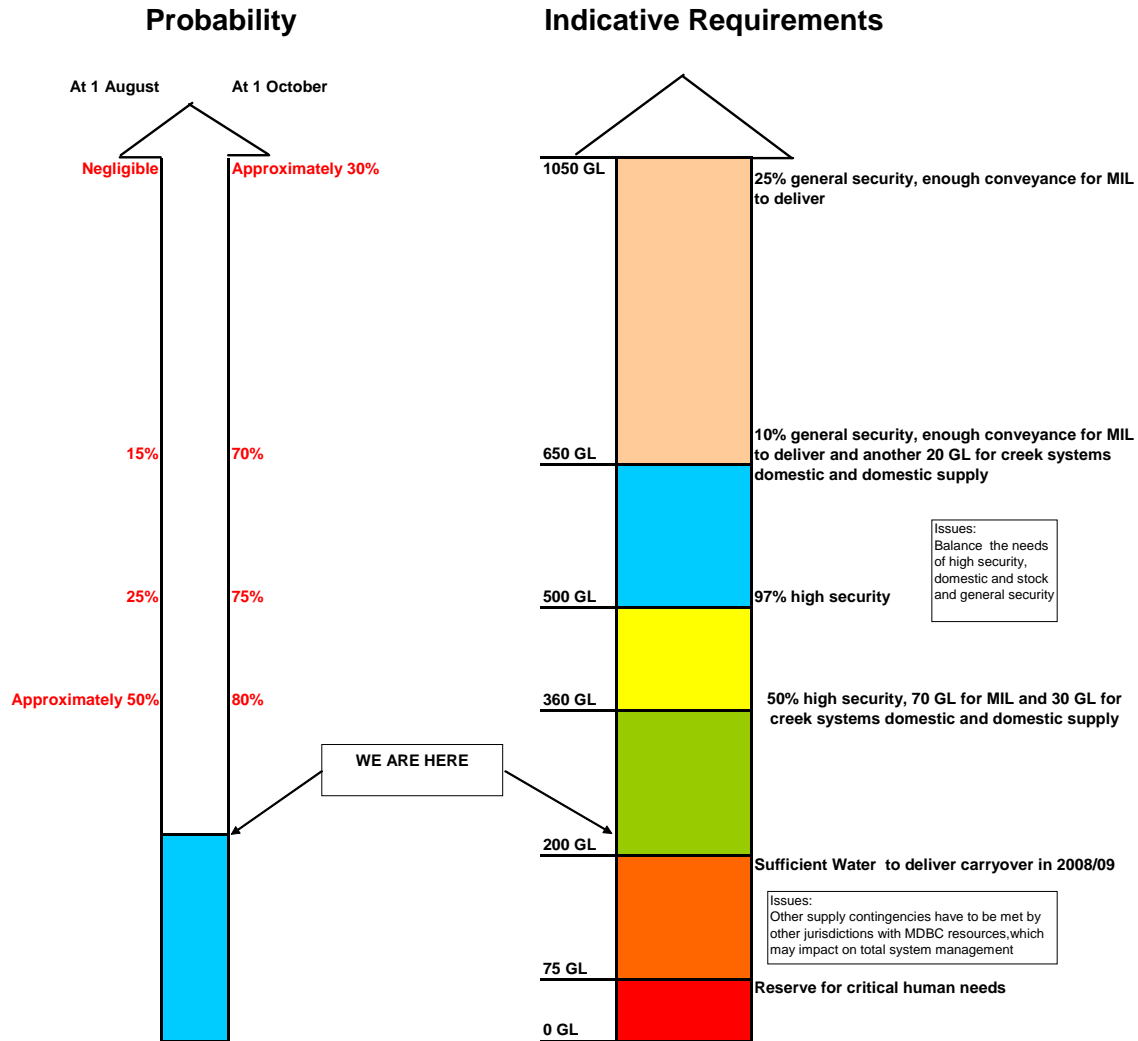
Compliance

The Drought Contingency Planning Program will only work if everyone adheres to the restrictions and is careful with **all** water use. To ensure that the system is run fairly, the community should report any suspected breaches to the Department of Water and Energy's Compliance Unit on 1800 633 362 or by email to watercompliance@dwe.nsw.gov.au. All reports are confidential.

Water availability outlook

NSW Murray Valley Outlook

Based on end of May Assessment



Note: this advice only provides an indication of **potential** improvements and any planning decisions should also recognise the current conditions and meteorological predictions.

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