



Critical water planning for the Murray Valley

Issue 24 | 15 June 2009

CURRENT WATER AVAILABILITY

While there has been welcome rainfall across the catchment over the past month, it has only produced minor inflows into the valley's storages. This rainfall has improved soil moisture and "wet up" the catchment profile so that future rainfall should generate run off. The recent snowfalls in the upper catchments of the Snowy Mountains will not improve Murray Valley water availability in the short term.

Seasonal weather predictions by the Bureau of Meteorology are for the chance of average rainfall in the Murray Valley being slightly less than average.

Rainfall over the past month has been below average although the western part of the NSW Murray Valley has received some good falls in the past two weeks.

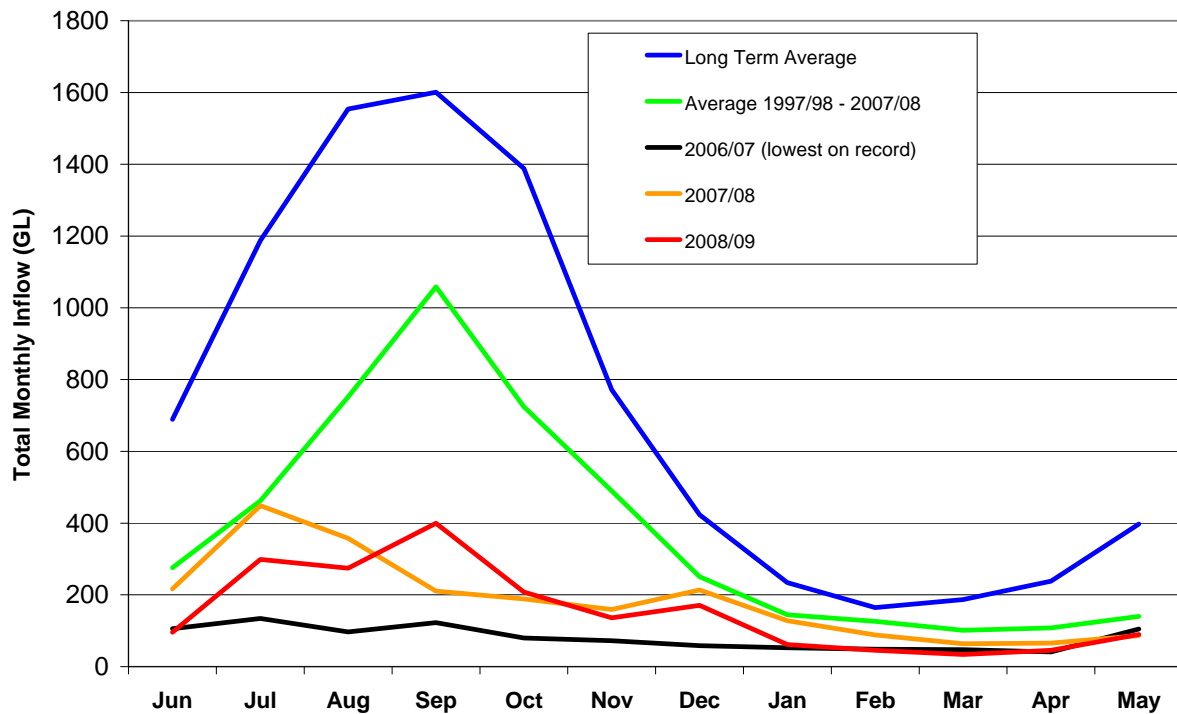
From 12 May to 11 June, Thredbo Village has received 98.7 millimetres (mm); which is 60 per cent of the June average, Albury 49 mm; 70 per cent of the June average, Deniliquin 40.6 mm; 50 per cent of the June average and Mildura 30.8 mm; 135 per cent of the June average.

The following table shows Murray Valley storage levels as at 11 June, 2009.

Storage @ 11 June 2009	Volume (GL)	Percent of capacity	Change (GL) in Volume since 12 May	Volume at this time last year
Hume Dam	233	8	+101	426
Dartmouth Dam	832	21	+17	686
Menindee Lakes	222	13	-6	550
Lake Victoria	177	26	+37	274
Total volume	1464		+149	1936

There is also a considerable volume of water stored in the Murrumbidgee Valley that will be transferred into the Murray Valley in 2009-10.

INFLOW GRAPH



Inflows are now similar the low levels experienced in 2006-07.

WHAT THIS MEANS

At this stage there is sufficient water in the NSW Murray Valley to provide for;

- critical human needs
- some domestic and stock needs
- but there is not currently sufficient water available to provide all the conveyance water required for 2009-10.

Any initial shortfall in conveyance water will be sourced from carryover. This means that there will be insufficient water to guarantee the delivery of 100 per cent of the carryover on 1 July 2009. It is expected that NSW Murray irrigators will have access to at least 60 per cent of carryover on 1 July; however this number may change prior to 1 July if there is significant rain.

All three Basin States will provide a consistent approach to access of carry-over. That is, each State will have access to the same proportion of carry-over as other States until 100 percent of carry-over is available. There is a very high probability that full carryover will be available early in the new water year.

NSW has considerably less water available for consumptive use this year because of the low volumes in the Menindee Lakes system.

CARRYOVER

Carryover from 2008-9 into next year is available for all licence categories except town water supply and stock and domestic.

Carryover is limited to the 100 per cent of licensed entitlement. This means that if your licensed entitlement is 150 megalitres, this is the maximum that can be carried over. This includes all water traded in.

Water will be carried over automatically at the end of the water year.

The total amount of water that can be credited to accounts in 2009-10 from carryover and announced allocation is 100 per cent. Additional water is only available if purchased in 2009-10.

MID-MURRAY TRIBUTARIES

The provision of flows for Stock and Domestic purposes in the tributaries of the Murray is a high priority. However, while water availability remains critically low, the needs of **all sections** of the Murray Valley community must be considered and balanced. Until there is a substantial improvement in water availability, flows into the NSW mid-Murray tributaries will continue to be provided in replenishments until sufficient water is available to have met high security and a general security allocation.

MANAGEMENT OF THE MENINDEE LAKES

The rainfall system that caused severe flooding on the NSW North Coast in May has also provided significant inflows into the Moonie and Border Rivers on the Queensland-NSW border. These flows have now passed into the Barwon River between Mungindi and Bourke, and are expected to provide a small “fresh” into the Menindee Lakes system that is likely to be captured in Lake Wetherell without spilling into other lakes.

This water will be reserved to assure the continuity of water supply to Broken Hill, and to deliver high security allocations and carryover in the Lower Darling Valley throughout 2009-10.

Until there are further inflows, there will be no further transfers of water from the Menindee Lakes system to the Murray.

TOWN WATER SUPPLY

Councils and town water supply authorities are reminded to remain conservative with all water use. The Department is currently discussing the level of restrictions with town water supply authorities that will apply on 1 July 2009.

It is expected that water used for domestic purposes in rural areas will be restricted to the same level as Shire restrictions as has been applied in recent years. This will apply to water taken as basic landholder right and stock and domestic from surface and groundwater sources.

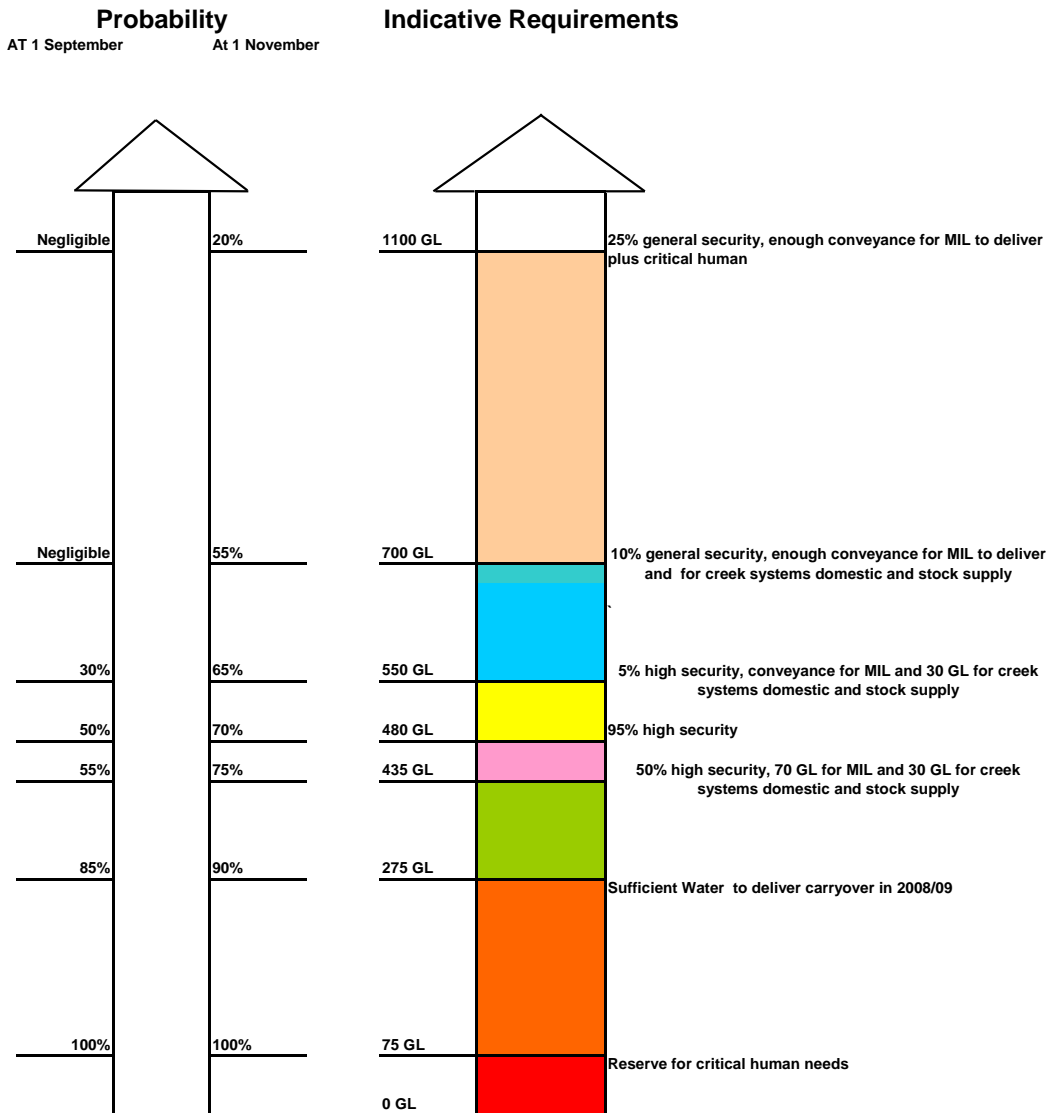
COMPLIANCE

The Department of Water and Energy’s 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’s Compliance Unit on 1800 633 362 or by email to watercompliance@dwe.nsw.gov.au. All reports are confidential.

WATER AVAILABILITY OUTLOOK

The figures that have been used to calculate this diagram are based on dry tercile (driest 1/3 of years) and are very conservative. The volumes on the “rocket” are indicative only and may change depending on the priority of access following stakeholder feedback.

□ NSW Murray Valley Outlook As at 15 June 2009



NOTE: The volumes above are indicative only, they may change depending on when improvements occur and if they are accompanied by heavy local rain. Management of improved allocations will be discussed with the Critical Water Advisory Committee.

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