

Critical water planning for the Murray Valley

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CURRENT WATER AVAILABILITY

Rainfall in the Murray Valley in the past month has maintained flows in the Kiewa and Ovens rivers, but has not provided significant inflows into Murray water storages. Rainfall in the western parts of the NSW Murray Valley has been extremely low, with soil moisture now reducing rapidly. There has only been a very small increase in water released by Snowy Hydro Limited.

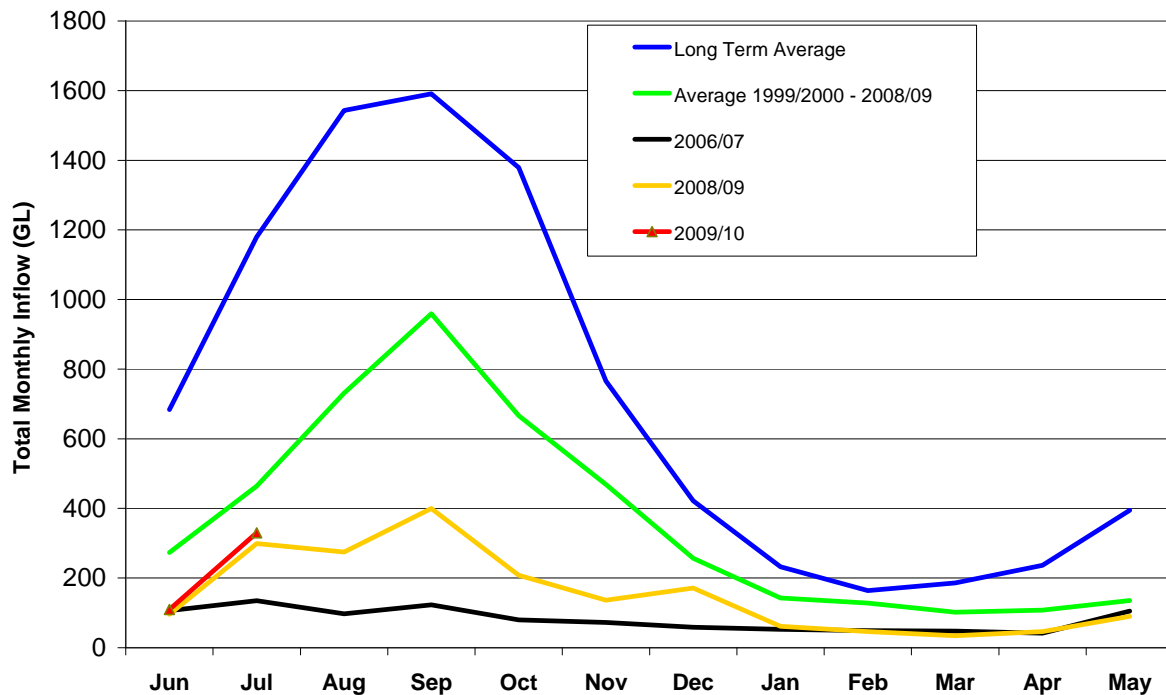
From 13 July to 13 August, Thredbo Village received 104.8 millimetres (mm); which is 60 per cent of the August average, Albury received 48.2 mm; 50 per cent of the August average, Deniliquin received 3.6 mm; 10 per cent of the August average, and Mildura received 1.8 mm; 10 per cent of the August average. The outlook for the coming months is for average or just below average rainfall, with the potential for an El Nino developing.

The following table shows Murray Valley storage levels as at 13 August 2009.

Storage @ 13 August 2009	Volume (GL)	Percent of capacity	Change (GL) in Volume since 11 June	Volume at this time last year
Hume Dam	562	19	+146	716
Dartmouth Dam	895	23	+35	746
Menindee Lakes	245	14	+6	521
Lake Victoria	291	43	+36	307
Total volume	1993		+223	2290

200 GL of future Snowy inflow will be transferred into the Murray Valley in 2009/10, to minimise the flow required through Balranald to clear trades undertaken last year.

INFLOW GRAPH



Inflows in 2008/09 and so far in July have been higher than record low levels in 2006/07, but are still well below average.

WHAT THIS MEANS

There has been a significant improvement in the water resources available within the Murray Valley in the past month. This is due to the slow recession of natural inflows and continuing flows from the Kiewa and Ovens rivers. While water from the Kiewa is shared between the States, water from the Ovens is owned by Victoria under the Murray-Darling Basin Agreement.

This improvement has been allocated to the repayment of water borrowed from Victoria that was used at the start of the water year to guarantee the delivery of NSW carryover and enable an early high security allocation. This arrangement was made under the 2009/10 tri-state water sharing arrangements and contingency measures agreed to by all states should the extreme drought conditions continue. However, these contingencies are now no longer required.

NSW has now repaid approximately half of the water borrowed from Victoria to underwrite its supply of carryover and early high security allocations. From now on, any significant rain will result in water becoming available to NSW. The highest priority in the distribution of available water in NSW will be to increase high security allocations and to reserve water to provide a domestic and stock replenishment to the Wakool River system.

MID MURRAY TRIBUTARIES

The provision of flows for stock and domestic purposes in the tributaries of the Murray Valley is a high priority. There is still insufficient water available to NSW to provide flows immediately. Water will be progressively reserved as it becomes available to NSW and will be shared between consumptive allocation and tributary flows.

TOWN WATER SUPPLY

With the high security allocation at 8 per cent of entitlement, councils requested to continue to implement level 4 water restrictions. This request is consistent with the Murray and Murrumbidgee valleys water restrictions policy. Councils may purchase water on the temporary water market (*20 per cent of the water required to deliver level 4*) to relax restrictions to level (3a) i.e. 4 hours of outside watering per week. Councils that have a regulated river general or high security licence may also trade water from that licence to their town water utility licence under the provisions of section 71T.

TRADE

An interim moratorium on the temporary trade of water from the Murrumbidgee Valley to the Murray Valley, including interstate trades, was announced on 30 June 2009. This moratorium was announced because of potentially excessively high transmission losses that would occur if the volumes of trades into the Murray Valley via the Murrumbidgee were to continue throughout the year. The NSW Office of Water is currently developing strategies to enable the moratorium to be relaxed as soon as possible.

MANAGEMENT OF THE MENINDEE LAKES

Small flows continue throughout the Barwon-Darling River, but are providing only low flows into the Menindee Lakes. Lake Wetherell is effectively full and holds sufficient water to maintain supplies to Broken Hill for 21 months and to deliver high security and carryover for the current water year. If conditions remain dry during the coming months, the NSW Office of Water will consider using flows in the Lower Darling to secure Broken Hill's water supply.

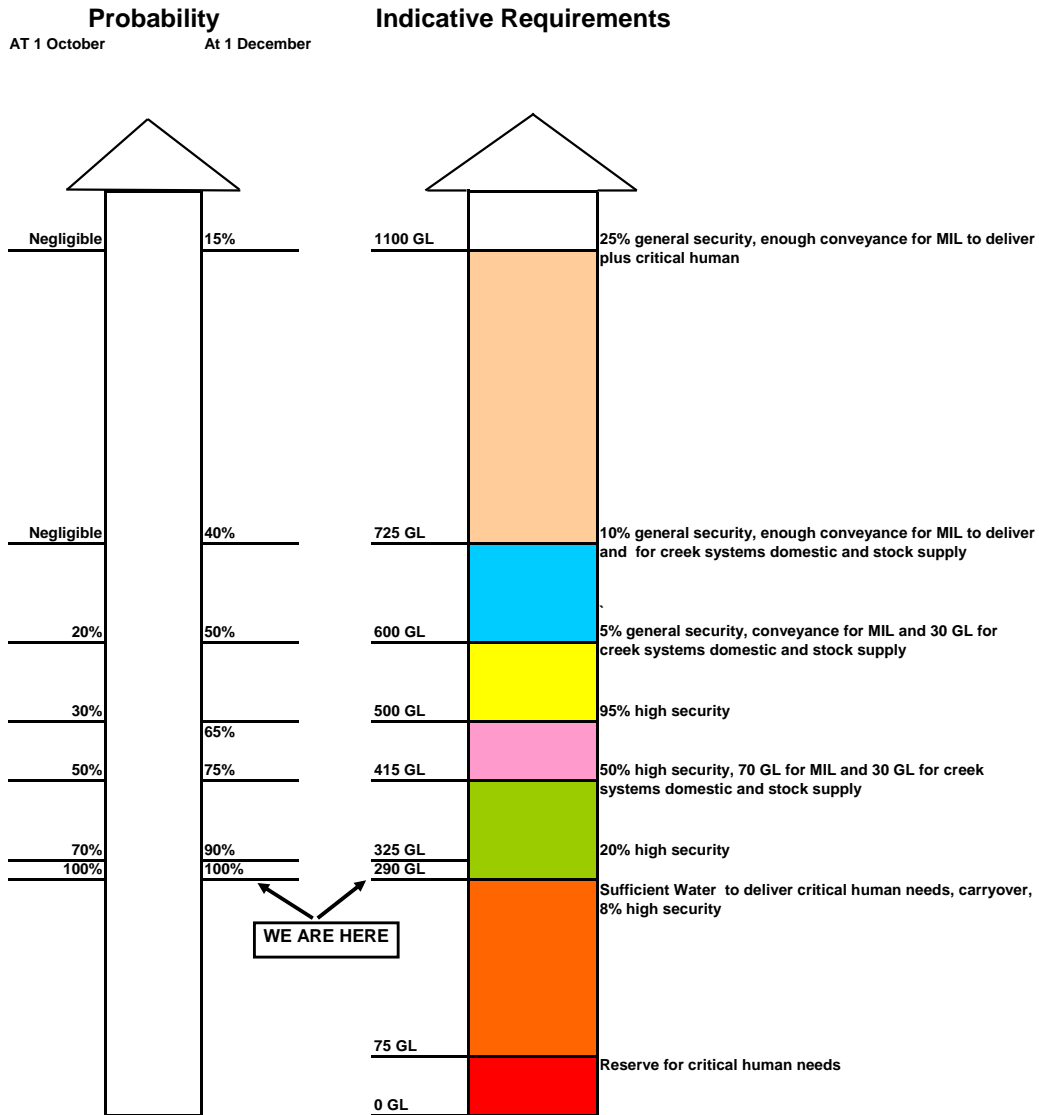
COMPLIANCE

The NSW Office of Water'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 Office'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 August 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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