

Critical water planning for the Murray Valley

Issue 27 | 15 September 2009

CURRENT WATER AVAILABILITY

Rainfall over the past month has fallen mostly in the upper parts of the catchment with significant falls in the alpine regions. There has been little rain in the western parts of the catchment.

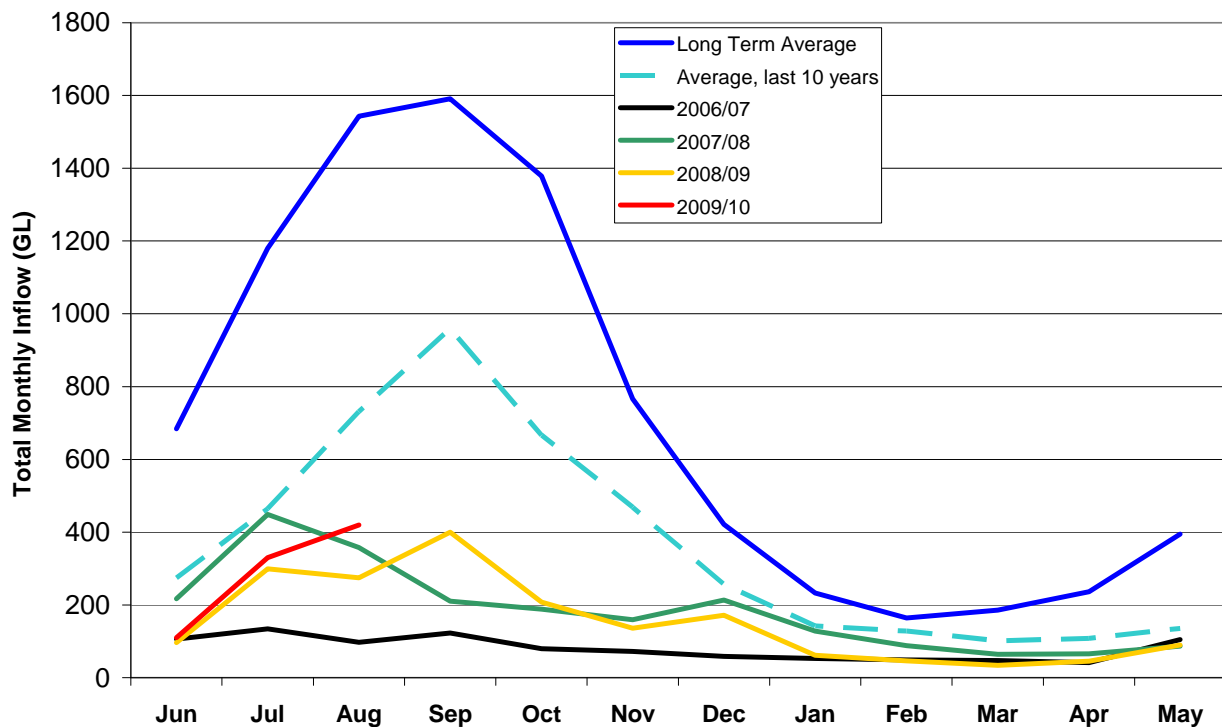
From 13 August to 11 September, Thredbo Village received 269 millimetres (mm); which is 130 per cent of the September average, Albury received 48.5 mm; 70 per cent of the September average, Deniliquin received 14mm; 40 per cent of the September average, and Mildura received 8.4 mm; 30 per cent of the September average.

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

Storage @ 11 September 2009	Volume (GL)	Percent of capacity	Change (GL) in Volume since 13 August 2009	Volume at this time last year	Long term average percent (Sept 30)
Hume Dam	815	27	+253	935	81
Dartmouth Dam	988	25	+93	785	81
Menindee Lakes	232	13	-13	503	68
Lake Victoria	278	41	-13	320	88
Total volume	2313		+320	2543	

While August inflows are the highest that have been seen for the past 4 years, they are still only about a quarter of the long term average.

INFLOW GRAPH



As a result of intervalley and interstate trade last year, 200 GL of water is currently being held in the Murrumbidgee Valley storages that is to be provided into Murray Valley this year. To reduce the losses, Snowy Hydro Ltd will release 200GL into the Murray system rather than the Murrumbidgee so that traded volumes may be delivered via the Murray River. Snowy Hydro Ltd will deliver this water into Hume Dam 2009/10.

WHAT THIS MEANS

There has been a significant improvement in water availability in the River Murray from natural inflows, from diversions from the Snowy system and from inflows from the Kiewa River to the Murray River. The wetter conditions have meant that rainfall is generating runoff and inflows should persist for the remainder of September.

NSW has now repaid all of the water borrowed from Victoria and is now able to increase high security allocations to 50 per cent of entitlement. A small volume of water has also been reserved to increase the conveyance allocation to Murray Irrigation Limited which is required to deliver domestic and stock water.

An important milestone has also been reached with the allocation of water to the Wakool system which will enable to commencement of flows to supply domestic and stock and environmental requirements.

MID MURRAY TRIBUTARIES

Approximately 30 gegalitres of water is being delivered into the Wakool system. Releases of this water will commence this week to freshen stock and domestic supplies and improve water quality.

The NSW Office of Water has consulted with the local community and other government agencies prior to this release. Releases into the system will be made at lower rates and be

maintained for as long as possible to avoid the system drying out in summer. The Office of Water, in cooperation with State Water Corporation will monitor the flow and will modify the release strategy if required.

TOWN WATER SUPPLY

With the high security allocation at 50 per cent of entitlement, Councils may relax water restrictions to level 3. This is consistent with the Murray and Murrumbidgee valleys water restrictions policy. Level 3 restrictions allow for 8 hours of outside watering per week.

TRADE

A ballot has been conducted by State Water Corporation on instruction from the NSW Office of Water. Of the total 70,000 megalitres available, 64,347 megalitres was traded out of the Murrumbidgee with the bulk being traded to the NSW Murray Valley.

Due the continuing drought, the moratorium on trades from the Murrumbidgee to the Murray Valley will continue with consideration being given to further ballots if required, and if the circumstances allow additional water to be delivered to downstream users via the Murray River.

MANAGEMENT OF THE MENINDEE LAKES AND LOWER DARLING FLOWS

Low flows continue throughout the Barwon-Darling River and into the Menindee Lakes. These low flows combined with less than expected evaporation has resulted in the volume in Lake Wetherell remaining at 90 per cent of capacity.

There is currently sufficient water to maintain supplies to Broken Hill for 21 months, to deliver 100 per cent of high security entitlements and carryover for the current water year and allow an allocation of 25 per cent for general security licence holders.

There is sufficient water to maintain minimum flows in the river throughout 2009/10, but this will be reviewed in early 2010.

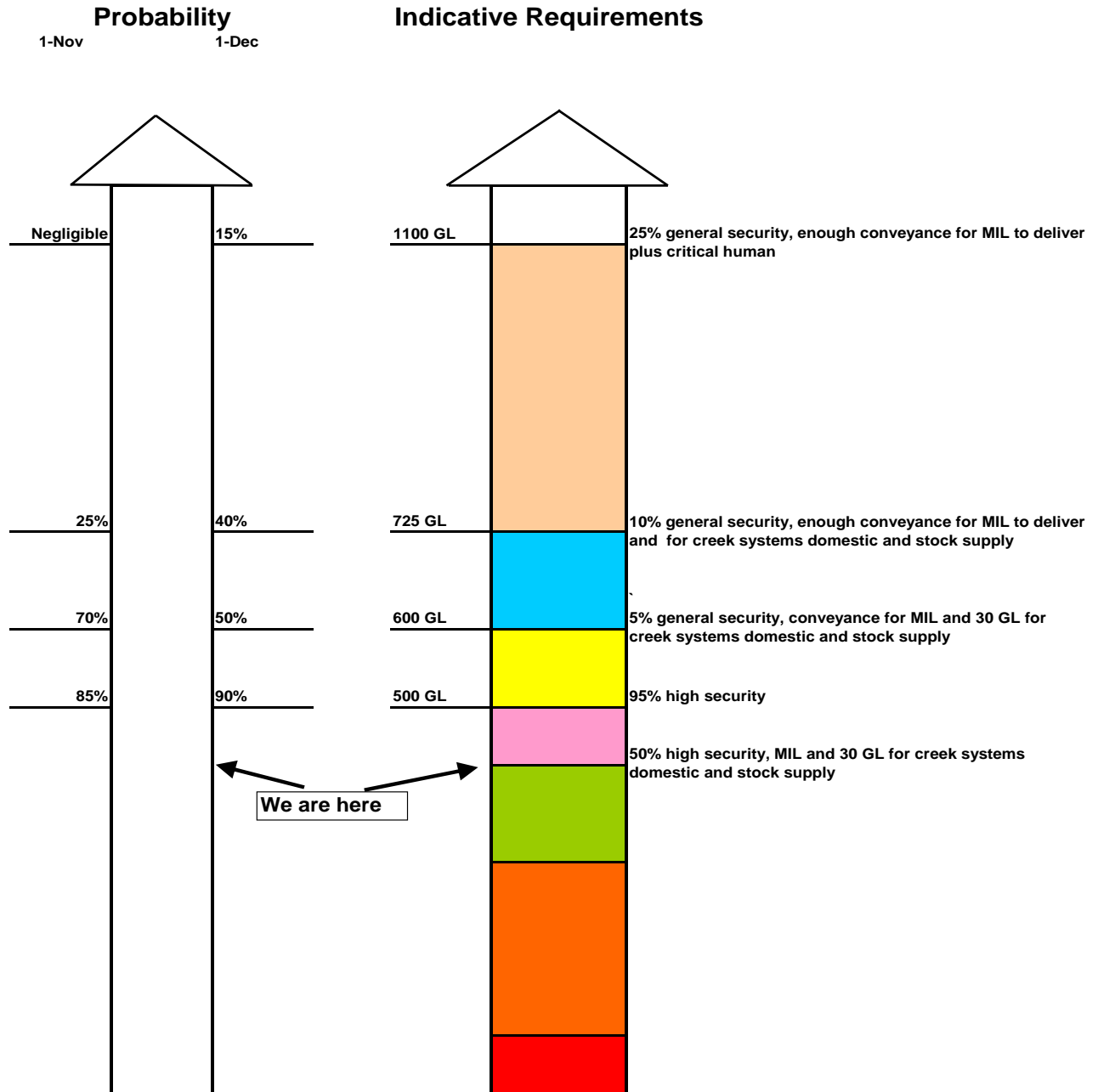
COMPLIANCE

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 September 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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