

Friday, 15 May 2009

OPENING IRRIGATION ALLOCATION LIKELY FOR NEW WATER YEAR

Minister for the River Murray Karlene Maywald says irrigators are likely to begin the new water year on July 1 with an opening allocation of at least two percent and access to at least 50 percent of eligible carryover.

She says while recent rain across the Murray-Darling Basin last month boosted River Murray inflows, they were still well below the long-term average.

“The 50 gegalitres of inflows recorded during April was less than a quarter of the long-term April average of 240 GL,” she said.

“There was a slight improvement of 20 GL in the amount of water available to South Australia, and this will be used to deliver water in 2009-10,” she said.

“As announced last month, irrigation allocations will remain at 18pc for the rest of 2008-09.”

Minister Maywald said water would be available to licensed users who had applied to carryover water from the current water year for use in 2009-10.

“A total of 793 applications have been received to carry-over irrigation water for delivery in 2009-10.

“The total amount of water eligible for private carry-over will be calculated following end-of-year meter readings but at this stage irrigation trusts have applied to carryover 88 gegalitres and individual licence holders 113 GL.

“At least 50 percent of eligible carryover will be allocated from July 1 with the remainder to be allocated as the season improves.

“Licence holders are reminded that the provision of carry-over depends on climate conditions and the ability to deliver it from interstate storages to South Australia. While the government is confident that carry-over can be supplied, as in previous years an absolute guarantee cannot be given.

“At this stage, no decision has yet been made on the provision of a critical water allocation to keep permanent plantings alive, as was provided in 2008-09. The provision of CWA in 2009-10 will depend on rainfall and inflows received in winter and spring this year and whether or not a market exists to purchase underwriting water.”

Murray-Darling Basin storages are at only 14 percent of capacity, or 1321 GL.

Salinity levels between the border and Lock 1, and at Mannum and Murray Bridge, generally remain low. However, salinity levels in the Lower Lakes remain high.

The average water level in Lake Alexandrina is currently minus 1m AHD, and in Lake Albert is currently minus 0.35m AHD.

The final water resource update for 2008-09 will be issued on 15 June 2009. This announcement will include the actual starting allocation for 2009-10.

For more information about conditions in the River Murray or wider Murray-Darling Basin visit www.dwlbc.sa.gov.au/murray/drought/