

MEDIA RELEASE

River Murray water resources update

16 March 2011

River Murray water resource and storage conditions continue to improve as water from the previous heavy rainfall events across the River Murray system and southern Queensland moves through the River Murray system.

River Murray system inflow during February 2011 was 2,100 GL, which is the highest recorded inflow for February and well above the long-term February average of 170 GL.

System inflow from June 1 last year, including the exceptionally high inflow for February, has resulted in a total system inflow of approximately 15,470 GL, which is in the highest 20 per cent of inflow records.

This means that the River Murray system has now received eight consecutive months of above-average inflow, which is providing substantial benefits for the riverine environment, Lower Lakes and Coorong.

This flow has helped many areas to recover from the prolonged drought but sustained higher flow is required for full recovery. Improved inflow in the River Murray system and the high volumes in storage continue to build reserves to give South Australia, along with the other states, a good start to the 2011-12 water year.

The total volume of water currently held in the storages controlled by the Murray-Darling Basin Authority is 7,343 GL or 79 per cent capacity. The volume held in storage at the same time last year was 2,812 GL or 30 per cent capacity.

As previously announced, the Murray-Darling Basin Authority has provided a preliminary assessment of the potential water availability in 2011-12, which indicates that South Australia will again receive its full 1,850 GL Entitlement Flow for 2011-12. There is also a high chance of unregulated flows in 2011-12, particularly if catchments remain wet.

It is highly likely that irrigation allocations will be 100 per cent from 1 July.

The improved flow conditions have provided South Australia with about 10,200 GL so far in 2010-11.

The total flow to South Australia in 2010-11 could exceed 13,350 GL, based on the current flow conditions across the Murray-Darling Basin. This will be the highest flow since 1993-94, when 13,382 GL flowed across the border. This substantial flow will further enhance recovery of the River Murray in South Australia.

River Murray flow at the South Australian border has peaked but will remain high during the remainder of March 2011. There are no further flow peaks in transit upstream of South Australia, with flow to South Australia now receding at a slow rate.



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As flow recedes and water drains from the floodplain there is a chance of increased river salinity, as observed in previous high flow events. South Australia will be provided with Unregulated Flow until the end of May 2011 and Additional Dilution Flow until mid-September 2011, which will help to dilute saline return flow.

The Department for Water will continue to provide weekly River Murray Flow Advice updates on the Water for Good website each Friday while high flow conditions persist.

For more information visit www.waterforgood.sa.gov.au and use this advice where necessary. For more information about conditions in the River Murray or wider Murray-Darling Basin visit www.mdba.gov.au.



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