

How we make decisions

OEH is supporting the health and resilience of rivers and wetlands by delivering water for the environment where and when it is needed.

We use the best available science, management expertise and experience to manage water across the landscape.

This statement of annual priorities identifies the waterways and wetlands that are likely to receive water.

As rainfall is hard to predict, our decision-making process considers:

- expected availability of water in the coming year
- conditions of the previous year
- current health of the plants and animals in these ecosystems.

Community-based Environmental Water Advisory Groups (EWAGs) provide feedback and advice to OEH on the management of water for the environment.

What is water for the environment?

Water for the environment is a share of the water in dams and rivers that is set aside to support the long-term health of local rivers, creeks and wetlands. Healthy rivers carry water to homes, farms, schools and businesses. In the Murrumbidgee catchment, rivers and wetlands are important cultural and spiritual sites for Aboriginal people.

About the Murrumbidgee catchment

The Murrumbidgee catchment covers 81,527 square kilometres and includes 26 storage or diversion structures, 1690 kilometres of the river, and surrounding wetlands. The climate conditions range from alpine in the Snowy Mountains to semi-arid on the Riverina plains.

Wetlands throughout the Murrumbidgee support threatened species listed under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* and NSW *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*.

Expected environmental water volumes available at 1 July 2018

Source	Maximum volume available	Volume expected at 1 July under current conditions
Planned environmental water		
Environmental water allowance (1)	50 gigalitres	50 gigalitres
Environmental water allowance (2)	Triggered by inflows to the dam	30 gigalitres
Environmental water allowance (3)	Triggered by inflows to the dam	-
Water licenced to NSW		
General security	31.4 gigalitres	4 gigalitres
Supplementary	6.7 gigalitres	Dependent on surplus flows
Lowbidgee supplementary access licence (South Redbank/Yanga)	148 gigalitres	Dependent on surplus flows
Water licenced to the Commonwealth		
High security	10 gigalitres	10 gigalitres
General security	309.5 gigalitres	70 gigalitres
Conveyance	29.6 gigalitres	28 gigalitres
Supplementary	22 gigalitres	Dependent on surplus flows from unregulated tributaries
Lowbidgee supplementary	393 gigalitres	Dependent on surplus flows

Note: This is an indicative summary of volumes expected to be available. For further detail and information on available volumes, please contact the region via OEH enquiries on 1300 361 967.

1 gigalitre = 1000 megalitres
2.5 megalitre = 1 Olympic swimming pool

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OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENT & HERITAGE

Murrumbidgee catchment

Annual Environmental Watering Priorities 2018-19



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Water for rivers and wetlands

In 2018–19, water managers will continue to build on the success of previous years through the careful management of water for the environment.

Last year, OEH worked with the Commonwealth Environmental Water Office to deliver a whole-of-system wetland reconnection flow (236 gigalitres). This event connected hundreds of wetlands across the Murrumbidgee catchment from the mid-Murrumbidgee through to the Murray junction. Water was also used to maintain refuge habitats.

This year managed watering events will focus on improving habitat for native fish, waterbirds and other aquatic species.

Water managers plan to supplement existing system flows to provide the maximum benefit to plants and animals. Watering events will aim to restore a more natural flow pattern to support a robust food web and other system functions. Water will be managed to provide essential refuge habitat and connect floodplain wetlands with the river to aid in the movement of essential nutrients and native fish.

Weather and water forecast

In the Murrumbidgee catchment, warmer and drier than average conditions are forecast for the coming year with the possibility of wetter conditions as the season progresses. Water management plans reflect this.

Water managers have prepared watering plans that take into consideration a range of weather and water availability scenarios in case it rains more or less than expected. This is known as [Resource Availability Scenario planning](#). Dry to moderate conditions are forecast for the Murrumbidgee catchment in 2018–19.

Key planned actions for 2018–19

Waterbirds

- Flows (up to 200 gigalitres) are planned to provide suitable habitat for waterbirds, turtles and frogs and other aquatic species in Yanga National Park, Nimmie-Caira wetlands and the North Redbank system.

Vegetation

- Flows (part of the 200 gigalitre flow) are planned to maintain the character, condition and resilience of vegetation and habitat.

Native fish

- Flows (up to 120 gigalitres) are planned to maintain floodplain habitats for native fish and restore a more natural flow pattern to support native fish populations.

Connectivity

- Flows (up to 100 gigalitres) will connect the Lowbidgee lakes and remove the effects of three weirs within the lower Murrumbidgee river channel.

