



MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday 13 March 2008

Mid-Murray flows and levels to be lowered

Murray-Darling Basin Chief Executive Dr Wendy Craik advised today that as a result of persistent hot conditions along the mid and lower reaches of the Murray, some weirpools will be temporarily lowered.

River flows through Sunraysia can be expected to fall to low levels over the next couple of weeks, or possibly longer if hot conditions persist.

“Temperatures in Sunraysia and South Australia have been more than 6° C above average in the last week and hot conditions are forecast to continue over the coming week”, Dr Craik said.

“We’re seeing a large increase in demands and river losses in the hot conditions and harvests are running later than normal because of the relatively mild February”

Commencing Thursday 13 March, the weirpool levels of Euston, Torrumbarry and Yarrawonga (Lake Mulwala) will be temporarily lowered to help meet increased demands and river losses. It may also be necessary to draw upon Lock 8 as well as small amounts from the Mildura, Wentworth and Lock 9 pools.

“There is no intention to lower weirpools in South Australia and release from Lake Victoria is being adjusted to maintain these pools at or close to normal operating levels to control river salinity”, Dr Craik said.

“We’ve been running the river to minimise loss and conserve as much water as possible in Hume and Dartmouth Reservoirs for this season and next. This has resulted in lower than normal river flows in the mid Murray. The hot conditions now require the temporary lowering of weirpools to meet requirements.”

The extent and duration of the lowering of weirpools will be minimised as much as is practicable but will depend on weather and demand conditions over the coming weeks.

Initial expectations are that the level of Euston Weir pool will be drawn to between 0.4 and 0.6 m below full supply level over the coming week. The level of Torrumbarry Weir pool is expected to be drawn to between 0.2 and 0.4 m below full supply level over the same period. Lake Mulwala is also expected to be further lowered and may fall below the current lower target of 124.4 m AHD for a short period.

At Swan Hill, the water level is currently about 0.7 m (local gauge height) and is expected to fall to as low as 0.5 m over the coming weeks. Flow rates between Euston Weir and Lock 7 are expected to fall to low levels. A small increase in flow is expected from the Darling River later in March and will assist in meeting lower Murray requirements.

Further details will be provided over coming weeks and flow forecasts can be obtained at http://www.mdbc.gov.au/rmw/river_information_centre.

Boat operators, stock owners, river pumpers and other river users are advised to take the lower water levels and flows into account and make any necessary adjustments to their activities.

The Murray-Darling Basin Commission will continually review its river operational plans, taking into account emerging conditions. We will provide details of any significant changes via media releases, operational updates and weekly reports (available on the MDBC website).

Media contact: Sam Leone, MDBC Media Liaison Manager, Phone: 0407 006 332

Ref: 08/2698