



MEDIA RELEASE

Tuesday 27 May, 2008

Major new maintenance works at Mildura weir will need more flows from Lake Mulwala

The Murray-Darling Basin Commission (MDBC) announced today that major maintenance and replacement works at Mildura Weir will start in mid-June.

Chief Executive Dr Wendy Craik AM said the weir would be temporarily removed and the lock closed to allow some of the trestles to be replaced or refurbished as required.

“At the same time, releases from Lake Mulwala will be increased this weekend to maintain flows at Mildura,” Dr Craik said. “The flows are necessary to minimise any temporary increases in river salinity downstream of Mildura due to saline inflow from the adjacent water table.

“Flows from Lake Mulwala will arrive at Mildura Weir during the drawdown and will help refill Mildura weir pool as quick as possible.

“The lower level of Lake Mulwala may also provide an additional benefit by allowing frost to kill an introduced aquatic weed that has spread throughout the Lake,” Dr Craik said.

Dr Craik said it was necessary to complete the trestle maintenance at Mildura Weir before the beginning of the next irrigation season.

“The water released from Mildura Weir Pool and Lake Mulwala will be recaptured in Lake Victoria where it will be available for use next irrigation season.

“This co-ordinated and very important operation has the support of each of the three states responsible for managing water allocations and river salinities in this time of extreme drought”, Dr Craik said.

At Mildura, the proposed schedule for works is as follows:

Proposed Date	Action
11th June	Commence removal of Mildura weir bars and trestles, and commence gradual lowering of weir pool
approx 25th June	Expected date of commencement of refilling of Mildura weir pool
early July	Expected date of completion of refilling of weir pool to near full supply level. This date will be dependent on available river flows.

Dr Craik said the above schedule will be adhered to as far as possible, however, some minor variations in timing may be required in response to river conditions and other circumstances that may arise at the time.

Withdrawal of the weir will lead to a lowering of the weir pool level by about 3.6 m below the normal full supply level.

Water quality measurements will be taken during the drawdown, so that any salinity impacts at Mildura or downstream to Lake Victoria can be carefully assessed.

It is intended to divert any higher salinity water into Lake Victoria to minimise impacts on South Australia.

At Lake Mulwala, the proposed schedule is as follows:

Proposed Date	Action
31 st May	Increase release from 1 800 ML/day to about 4 500 ML/day.
Mid June	Reduce release from about 4 500 ML/day to about 1 800 ML/day. Lake Mulwala level to fall to at least 122.7m AHD under dry conditions.
Late July or earlier	Expected date of refilling Lake Mulwala to normal operating range

At Lake Mulwala, the current release downstream is 1 800 ML/day (0.3 m gauge height), and if conditions remain dry it is expected to be increased to about 4 500 ML/day on 31 May 2008 and remain at about this rate for about 2 weeks before being gradually reduced back to 1 800 ML/day.

The water level in Lake Mulwala is already partially lowered and is currently 123.7 m AHD (or 1.2 m below Full Supply Level).

If conditions remain dry over the coming weeks, the level in Lake Mulwala is expected to fall at least another metre.

The actual duration and extent that Lake Mulwala will be lowered will depend on inflows from the Ovens and Kiewa Rivers.

“To enable irrigation diversion at the commencement of the next irrigation season, it is expected that the water level of Lake Mulwala would be returned to the lower bounds of its operating range before late July using inflow from the Kiewa and Ovens Rivers where possible,” Dr Craik said.

During the drawdown of Lake Mulwala and Mildura Weirs, interference with habitat, including removal of trees, stumps and fallen logs and aquatic plants is prohibited.

In addition no works may be undertaken on the foreshore or the bed of Lake Mulwala without the express written permission of Goulburn-Murray Water in Victoria or a Planning Permit from the Shire of Corowa in NSW.

“MDBC will continue to review Murray operations over the coming weeks and will provide additional information if there are significant changes to this plan,” Dr Craik said.

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

For media inquiries contact: Sam Leone, phone 0407 006 332

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