



MEDIA RELEASE

Wednesday, 18th June 2008

Temporary rise in Murray salinity in Sunraysia district

The Murray-Darling Basin Commission today advised water users on the Murray River from Colignan to Lock 9 to expect an increase in salinity during the next few weeks as a result of the Mildura Weir drawdown.

The drawdown, which began on 11th June, is allowing major maintenance work of the trestles at Mildura Weir.

Chief Executive Dr Wendy Craik AM said that during the drawdown, an increased amount of saline groundwater influx to the river is expected.

“Additional water has been released from Lake Mulwala to help minimise the increases in river salinity, and to help refill the weir pool after the maintenance work is complete.”

“Daily water quality measurements will be taken during this operation, so that any salinity impacts along the river are carefully monitored and results made available to the community.”

Regular updates of river salinity will be reported on the MDBC’s website at; www.mdbc.gov.au/rmw/river_information_centre and in the MDBC’s weekly reports(also available on the MDBC website).

During a similar drawdown in May 2003, the river salinity at Mildura increased from 160 EC to a peak of 700 EC before returning to about 180 EC after the weir pool was refilled.

The higher salinity river water will flow downstream and is expected to reach the vicinity of Lake Victoria in mid July. At that time the flow past Lock 9 will be reduced as much as possible and the more saline water will be diverted into Lake Victoria where it will mix with the fresher lake water. The salinity in the lake is expected to rise by about 50 EC.

While the flow past Lock 9 is reduced (for about three weeks duration), water in the Lock 8 weir pool will be used to maintain a flow along Mullaroo Creek. In preparation for this operation, the Lock 8 weir pool will be temporarily raised to 60cm above FSL (Full Supply Level) and then gradually drawn on as required. Lock 8 may need to be lowered to 40cm below FSL at the end of this operation.

“Water users between Colignan and Lock 9 are advised to take into account the rise in river salinity when planning their operations over the next few weeks, Dr Craik said.

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