

Community update for Menindee and Lower Darling-Baaka

Innovative trial of environmental water flush to boost river health

The NSW Government today commenced a flush of 45-50 GL from the upper Menindee Lakes through the lower Darling-Baaka River to help clear the current infestation of blue-green algae impacting local communities.

The algal blooms have not budged in weeks, even as the weather has cooled down. This is why we have fast tracked an innovative trial that will allow us to access environmental water to improve connectivity between the northern and southern Murray-Darling Basin which will also have the added benefit of helping to disperse the blue-green algae.

The environmental flush will see water moving along a 500 km stretch of the river which is expected to reach the bottom of the system in about a week's time.

This trial has been in the works for some time and has been made possible with the full support of the Murray-Darling Basin Authority and the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder. NSW also appreciates the understanding and support provided by Victoria and South Australia in assisting to make this much needed release.

We will be monitoring the water quality as the flush moves down river and will continue to keep the community informed via regular updates. For more information go to: [Northern to southern Basin environmental flow protection trial | Water \(nsw.gov.au\)](#)

Inflows and allocations

Thanks to heavy rainfall and fresh inflows from across the northern Basin, up to 225 GL of new, good quality water is arriving in Menindee Lakes currently and over the coming months which will mean the top lakes remain at full capacity regardless of this flush.

It is important to point out these releases will not have any impact on water allocations for downstream users because we are using additional water that is protected from extraction.

Send us your ‘before and after’ photos of the river

In addition to staff regularly monitoring the river, we would appreciate photos you may have taken currently and then photos you capture in the coming days and weeks to help us track improvements in the water quality as the flush moves through. If you are happy to share your photos, please email them to water.enquiries@dpie.nsw.gov.au

What does a red alert for blue-green algae mean?

Red Alert warnings apply only to untreated water at the identified location and will remain in place until monitoring and test results confirm that the risk is sufficiently diminished.

People should avoid consuming untreated water from this waterbody and prevent pets and livestock from drinking this water. People should avoid recreational activities such as swimming, water skiing, canoeing and any other activity that brings them into contact with this waterbody until the red alert warning is lifted.

Potentially toxic blue-green algae may cause gastroenteritis if consumed, while contact can cause skin and eye irritations. Consumption of water containing algal toxins may cause liver damage and other health problems.

Boiling the water does not remove algal toxins. People who suspect they have been affected by blue-green algae should seek medical advice.

People should not eat mussels or crayfish from red alert warning areas. A precautionary approach to eating fin fish from red alert warning areas is advised. Any fish caught should be cleaned and washed thoroughly in uncontaminated water; the internal organs should not be eaten. Avoiding fishing during a bloom is the best way to minimise risk.

Updates and information about blue-green algae blooms and red level warning areas can be obtained by 1300 662 077 or visiting www.waternsw.com.au/water-quality/algae

Is the drinking water safe?

Yes. Essential Water provide treated water to the township of Menindee and Wentworth Shire Council provide treated water to Shire communities.

The quality of drinking water for customers has not been impacted by the high levels of blue-green algae identified in the Darling River in the Far West of NSW.

Community members should continue to avoid untreated water taken directly from the river as it is not considered potable and encourages local residents to prevent pets and livestock from drinking the river water.

Additional information

- To notify the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water of potential blackwater events email: waterqualitydata@dpie.nsw.gov.au
- To view community updates issued, visit [Community updates and frequently asked questions | Water \(nsw.gov.au\)](#)
- To report dead fish, fish struggling or gasping at the water surface, or crayfish leaving the water please call the **NSW DPI Fisheries Phonenumber 1800 043 536** or fill in a fish kill protocol and report form at: <https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/habitat/threats/fish-kills-2019-2020/info-sheet>
- Information on recent fish deaths is available at: [Fish kills in NSW](#). When reporting, please include the name of the river/waterbody, location and date of your observation and provide photographs. If possible, please also record what species are affected and an estimate of number of each species observed.
- Further information on blackwater events can be found at the DCCEE Water website at: [Hypoxic blackwater | Water \(nsw.gov.au\)](#)
- Additional information is also available on the Murray-Darling Basin Authority website at: <https://www.mdba.gov.au/climate-and-river-health/water-quality/fish-deaths>
<https://www.mdba.gov.au/water-management/infrastructure/menindee-lakes>
- Operational updates are available at: [WaterInsights - WaterNSW](#)
- Water quality data collected after the fish deaths at Menindee is available on the Environment Protection Authority web page at: <https://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/working-together/community-engagement/updates-on-issues/menindee-fish-kill>