

Replacing the Lower Murray-Darling Area Water Sharing Plan

The *Water Sharing Plan for the Lower Murray-Darling Unregulated River Water Source 2024* will replace the previous 2011 plan. This document answers frequently asked questions about the plan.

What is a water sharing plan?

Water sharing plans are statutory plans made under the *NSW Water Management Act 2000*. The rules in the plans allow equitable sharing of water for all water uses, including the environment. The plans have a statutory timeframe of 10 years.

The purpose of a water sharing plan is to:

- provide water users with a clear picture of when and how water will be available for extraction
- protect the fundamental environmental health of water sources
- ensure our water sources are sustainably managed in the long term.

The plans clearly define the rules for sharing in the available water in a water source. They also provide continuing or 'perpetual' licences that have a title separate from the land, enabling better water trading opportunities. In addition, plans set out requirements for basic landholder rights – domestic and stock rights, harvestable rights and native title rights.

Water sharing plans support the long-term health of rivers and aquifers by making water available specifically for the environment.

Why is the Lower Murray-Darling plan being replaced?

NSW water sharing plans are valid for 10 years and are subject to a review by the NSW Natural Resources Commission (the commission). The responsible minister may extend or replace a plan based on the recommendation of the commission.

In 2022, the commission completed its review of the *Water Sharing Plan for the Lower Murray-Darling Unregulated River Water Source 2011* and recommended the plan be replaced. The department has prepared a draft replacement plan for consultation – the *Draft Water Sharing Plan for the Lower Murray-Darling Unregulated River Water Source 2024*.

The draft replacement plan includes several changes, including some recommended by the commission.

How will the department consult on the replacement water sharing plan?

Stakeholder input is critical to the development of water sharing plans in NSW. We are consulting the community through:

Frequently Asked Questions

- face-to-face public information and consultation sessions
- a public information and consultation webinar session
- one-on-one sessions, on request
- public submissions
- inter-agency consultation.

The plan will be on public exhibition from 3 October to 11 November 2023. You can have your say by attending the information and consultation sessions and completing the submission form available from the department's website.

Is there a limit on how much water I can take with my licence?

Water Access Licences show the amount of entitlement that you have – called the share component. This share component can be expressed as ML/yr or a number of 'unit shares' in the available water resource. The amount of water you can take is based on:

- your licensed share component
- the available water determination (AWD)
- your account management rules and
- any relevant conditions on your access licence.

An AWD is made at least on 1 July each year at a minimum. The AWD sets out:

- a volume of water per share that will be placed into your water allocation account at the start of a water year (1 July) or
- a % of the entitlement volume if the share component is in ML/yr.

This is called an allocation. You can only take the volume of water that is in your water account, in accordance with the rules in the water sharing plan and any relevant conditions on your access licence and linked water supply work approval(s).

The total amount of water that can be taken by all water users in a water source is limited. This limit is known as the long-term average annual extraction limit (LTAAEL).

Are changes proposed to rules governing when I can take water?

There are no changes proposed to access rules.

For more information about when you can take water and when you can't, go to the report card on the department's website:

- *Report card for the Lower Murray-Darling Unregulated Water Source*

Access rules do not apply to take under basic landholder rights.

Are changes proposed to rules governing trading licence shares or water allocations?

There are no changes proposed to trade rules for water shares and allocations. For more information about trade rules, go to the proposed changes fact sheet and the report card on the department's website.

How can I obtain a licence or additional water for a commercial enterprise?

Licence shares or allocations may be acquired through the water market. The plan establishes rules governing buying and selling shares and allocations within and between water sources.

Does the draft plan propose changes to the estimated water requirements for basic landholder rights and licensed take?

We have updated the estimated water requirements for basic landholder rights. We have also updated the total volumes or unit shares specified in the share components of all access licences to reflect current information.

More information

The draft water sharing plan and other fact sheets are available from [the Water pages of the department's website](#).