

August 2022 | ISSUE #38

Government support to install modern fish-protection screens



Image credit: Tom Raynor of Department of Primary Industries – Fisheries.

A reminder to water users that the expressions of interest to install modern fish-protection screens is closing on 31 August. Apply now to participate in this important program.

Modern screens keep fish and debris in the river and out of infrastructure, without affecting water supply. The technology is available for any size and type of water diversion.

The NSW Department of Primary Industries – Fisheries has already helped early adopters to install screens. They are reporting significant power savings and lower demand charges. Fisheries monitoring is also showing major reductions in effects on native fish.

Funding and logistic support is now available for water users on the Barwon-Darling and Lower Mehi rivers, in the Moree, Walgett, Brewarrina, Bourke and Central Darling LGAs.

Applications for round one of the program close on Wednesday 31 August 2022. For more information and to submit an EOI, visit the [Fish Screens Australia website](#). Or contact [fishscreens](#) or call 1800 677 572 for more information.

A new era of water security for Greater Sydney



Communities and businesses across Sydney, the Blue Mountains and the Illawarra are well on their way to securing an enduring, sustainable and resilient water supply after the NSW Government's launch of the historic Greater Sydney Water Strategy.

The strategy will tackle the region's water challenges for the next 20 to 40 years – including droughts and a growing population – using the best possible mix of smart and innovative water solutions.

The strategy emphasises conserving water, while exploring water supply options that aren't reliant on rainfall. It aims for a cooler and greener city, improved waterways and coastal environments, and supports the water interests of Aboriginal communities.

Community feedback received during last year's public exhibition period informed the final strategy.

The strategy will deliver:

- investment in treated recycled water programs for non-drinking uses
- improved efficiency, leakage management and reuse programs
- purified recycled water demonstration plant and visitor centre showcasing recycled water technology and how purified recycle water can be used
- increased use of desalination
- smart use of stormwater.

Visit our [website](#) for more information about the Greater Sydney Water Strategy.

Proposed approach to negotiating agreements with landholders affected by environmental water deliveries



The NSW Government is developing a framework to outline our approach to negotiating agreements with landholders affected by environmental water deliveries at higher flow levels than current operating practice.

The Landholder Negotiation Framework aims to ensure the negotiation process with landholders is transparent, equitable, fair and consistent.

As part of this process, a discussion paper went on public exhibition from 7 March-15 April 2022 to seek feedback from stakeholders potentially affected by the [Reconnecting River Country Program](#).

An expert panel reviewed the submissions and developed a 'What you said, what we did' report. The report summarises:

- the public engagement and consultation process
- the submissions and feedback, including concerns, support and suggested improvements
- our response to the feedback and how it will inform the proposed regulation amendments.

To learn about the Landholder Negotiation Framework or to read the report visit the [Landholder Negotiation Framework](#) webpage.

Time to have your say - Namoi Regional Water Strategy



The department is inviting members of the community to get involved and have their say on the Namoi Regional Water Strategy. The strategy is now on public exhibition until 18 September 2022.

The strategy is one of 12 being developed across the state to help manage the water needs in the Namoi region over the next 20 years.

Community consultation will take place in early September with face-to-face meetings across the region and a live webinar.

Feedback and issues raised during the public exhibition phase will be considered when finalising the plan. Submissions can be made up until 18 September.

[Visit our website](#) to register for the webinar or for more information.

Action on floodplain harvesting to benefit all



Image credit: J Spencer OEH

The first-ever enforceable controls to reduce, restrict and limit floodplain harvesting now apply to the Border Rivers and Gwydir valleys, after the NSW Government's historic licensing and measurement reform came into effect in August. The reform means floodplain harvesting is now controlled within legal limits.

Licensing and measurement of floodplain harvesting in the two valleys will return significant volumes of water to floodplains, rivers and creeks, benefitting water birds, native fish and vegetation in the area.

Allocations to supplementary licence holders in the two valleys have also returned to normal. They were reduced in recent years to ensure water take in these valleys complied with the legal limits.

The licensing framework will be rolled out in other northern NSW valleys in coming months.

[Visit our website to learn more.](#)

Flood works remediation to deliver healthier floodplains



Image credit: Vince Bucello DPE

The NSW Government is committed to returning water to floodplains, wetlands, rivers and creeks by bringing unapproved flood works into compliance across the northern Basin.

The [Improving Floodplain Connections Program](#) will complement existing floodplain harvesting licensing and measurement regulations by improving floodplain connectivity in areas where unapproved flood works – some up to 30 years old – are impeding natural flows.

We are targeting high-priority structures that either need to be removed or modified to ensure they're following the rules. This means improved flows over floodplains and improved connectivity, resulting in a healthier natural environment and better outcomes for downstream water users.

The program is delivered in partnership with the Natural Resources Access Regulator (NRAR) and various NSW agencies and will target a range of unapproved flood works including levees, embankments, roads, dams and channels.

The program's first roll out is across the Border Rivers, with NRAR field officers having commenced site visits there in July. During the visits, NRAR staff collect information which will help them assess whether these flood works will require removal or modification, according to the rules set out in floodplain management plans.

When a flood work needs to be modified or removed, the NSW Government will work with landholders to design, assess - and where possible - seek approval for the changes. Landholders will be responsible for carrying out the work.

Field inspections will be carried out across the Gwydir, Macquarie, Barwon-Darling, and Namoi valleys soon.

[Visit our website to learn more.](#)

Meter installers refresh their skills for floodplain harvesting licensing



Two groups of certified storage meter installer and validators (CSVs) attended sessions in Narrabri in July to refresh their water storage meter installation skills.

With floodplain harvesting licences rolling out in the Gwydir and Border River regions, meters need to be installed to measure floodplain harvesting water take.

The training sessions hosted 19 commercial CSVs and 12 WaterNSW and Natural Resources Access Regulator (NRAR) officers, to refresh their skills, ask questions, review information and look at the installation of metering equipment.

More information about floodplain harvesting measurement, including information for meter installers, is available on the department's [website](#).

Wide-spread environmental benefits across the Murray-Darling Basin



Image credit: Mal Carnegie

After years of drought in parts of the Murray-Darling Basin, wetter conditions and a record delivery of water for the environment have benefitted the Basin in 2021-22.

The Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder has worked together with state agencies, First Nations and communities to deliver almost 2,000 gigalitres of water for the environment in the last year. These flows will support waterbird breeding, native fish spawning and migration, and get water to wetlands that would otherwise have missed out.

While it has been a successful year, there's more to do. Waterbird populations have been declining over the last 35 years, native fish populations are well below historical levels, and some floodplain wetlands rarely receive water.

This year, water for the environment will be delivered to continue to build the resilience of wetlands and floodplains, and support waterbird and native fish populations to rebuild.

For more information visit: [Wide-spread environmental benefits across the Basin](#).

Hunter flood mitigation repairs



The Hunter Valley Flood Mitigation Scheme helps reduce the effects of flooding for more than 250,000 people across the Hunter including Maitland, Raymond Terrace, Singleton and Aberdeen.

Since March 2021, this area has experienced 4 significant flood events. The flood mitigation infrastructure has helped reduce the risk to life and property by controlling the velocity, direction and depth of floodwaters.

To ensure the infrastructure remains flood ready, the NSW Government has announced \$21.5 million over eight years for extra resources and maintenance. A further \$50 million from the scheme's insurance policy will be used to repair damage from the flooding.

We are assessing the damage from the most recent flood event. Temporary emergency repairs have already been completed at the Horse Shoe Bend of the Maitland Levee, and work will soon begin on the Pitnacree Levee and other critical sites.

The investigation and design work needed for the permanent repairs should be complete by June 2023 and will inform the construction timeline.

Find out more [here](#).

Safe and Secure Water Program investing in water security



The Safe and Secure Water Program partners with councils and local water utilities to invest in water infrastructure across regional NSW. These projects help to strengthen and improve our water security.

Recent highlights of the program include:

- The new state-of-the-art Grenfell Sewerage Treatment Plant, which opened in July. The new plant will provide modern wastewater services to Grenfell and surrounds, replacing existing infrastructure that served the community for more than 80 years.
- Works have begun to upgrade the Wauchope Water Treatment Plant. New filtration membranes and a chlorine dosing facility will help filter and treat water, particularly during storms and heavy rainfall, to help safeguard the region's water security.
- The Bathurst Stormwater Harvesting project has awarded the construction tender. The stormwater harvesting scheme will build a 36 ML storage pond and 8 ML storage pond to capture stormwater run-off from drains and local catchments. Captured water will be treated at the Bathurst water treatment plant to ensure it is safe to use.
- The contract to design the new Bega and Tathra water treatment plant and operations depot has been awarded. The project is a joint initiative to deliver high quality, filtered water and improved water security for the area.
- Funding has also been committed for the concept design of a new water treatment plant for Baradine, and the detailed design of an upgraded sewage treatment system for Gilgandra.

To learn more about these projects and the Safe and Secure Water Program, [please visit our website](#).

Updates from NRAR



Image credit: Nearmap

NRAR accepts enforceable undertaking after company self-reports

An almond farming enterprise in the Riverina has avoided prosecution by self-reporting its non-compliance to the Natural Resources Access Regulator (NRAR). The company inherited faulty metering equipment after purchasing a 3,841-hectare property and began recording water taken through its bores in a logbook.

After new metering equipment was installed, the company became aware that the manual recording had been inaccurate and they had potentially exceeded their bore extraction limit by 449ML, equivalent to almost 180 Olympic-sized swimming pools. The company stopped taking water from the bore and self-reported the breach to NRAR.

NRAR has accepted an enforceable undertaking offer from the company that will see it forfeit water and face costs of more than \$73,000, including \$10,000 towards an environmental project. The breach highlights the importance of accurate metering, which takes the guess work out of measuring bore extraction and reduces reporting requirements.

[Find out more about how NRAR responds to breaches of the law.](#)



New regulatory priorities for the water regulator in 2022-23

The NSW Natural Resources Access Regulator (NRAR) sets annual regulatory priorities to identify and target problem activities, areas and industries with high levels of non-compliance or the potential to cause harm to the environment, community or other water users.

For the next 12 months, NRAR will focus on driving voluntary compliance in three priority areas. If you're a water user in NSW, make sure you know the rules.

NRAR's priorities for 2022-23 are:

- non-urban water metering reform and implementation
- water used for irrigated agriculture in the Murray, Murrumbidgee and Far North Coast
- water reporting in mining operations and extractive industries.

The regulator publishes these priorities annually to show how and where it focuses its efforts and to build and maintain confidence in how it regulates water in NSW.

To learn more about NRAR's annual and enduring priorities, head to [our website](#).



NRAR uses innovative technology to enhance water regulation

The Natural Resources Access Regulator (NRAR) is responsible for regulating water use across NSW, including 800,000 square kilometres and 38,000 water access licences.

The use of innovative technology increases the efficiency and accuracy of the water regulator's work, making it easier to detect and deter rule breakers.

In 2020, NRAR added satellite imagery and a drone fleet to its technology toolkit and have now acquired an autonomous boat capable of acoustically profiling dams to measure the volume of water storages, and a set of ultrasonic flow meters that measure water flow in closed pipes.

Combined, this expanding range of technology enhances NRAR's capability to proactively monitor water take and use across the state.

[Find out more, and watch a video about NRAR's state-of-the-art technology toolkit.](#)

Have your say

Current and upcoming consultations and information events:

Draft Namoi Regional Water Strategy Public exhibition 22 August - 18 September

This draft Namoi Regional Water Strategy is on the second round of public exhibition from Monday, 22 August until Sunday, 18 September 2022.

To find out more and have your say, stakeholders can:

- Read more about the strategy development, including feedback from previous consultations on our [project page](#)

- Read the current draft Namoi Regional Water Strategy which is a set of two documents, [Consultation Paper](#) and [Executive Summary](#).

Attend a [public information session](#):

- Narrabri - Monday 5 September, 2:00 pm – 5:00 pm
- Manilla - Wednesday 7 September, 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm
- Tamworth - Thursday 8 September, 1:30 pm – 4:30 pm
- [Webinar](#) - Monday 12 September, 12:30 pm – 2:00 pm

Yanco Creek Modernisation Project Community consultation 5 – 8 September

The first round of community consultation for the Yanco Creek Modernisation Project occurred in February 2021. These sessions provided the opportunity for local communities to gain a better understanding of the project and provide feedback to the project team and helped define a package of 8 project options to achieve the community benefits and project objectives.

To find out more and have your say, stakeholders can:

- Read more about the [Yanco Creek Modernisation Project](#)

Attend a [community drop in session](#):

- Moulamein - Monday 5 September, 2:00 pm – 5:00 pm
- Wanganella - Tuesday 6 September, 8:30 am – 11:00 am
- Conargo - Wednesday 7 September, 8:30 am – 11:00 am
- Jerilderie - Wednesday 7 September, 2:30 pm – 5:00 pm
- Morundah - Thursday 8 September, 8:30 am – 11:00 am

Stay up to date

The Water Engagement Roundup is a monthly webinar that provides updates on current consultation and engagement about important water policies and programs.

Register for the next webinar.

Latest water news from the department

- [Strategy securing Namoi's water future open for feedback](#)
- [New Dungowan Dam remains best option for future of Tamworth](#)
- [Temporary restriction on interstate water trade](#)
- [Hunter flood mitigation](#)
- [Certainty for the environment, farmers and water users](#)
- [Tender awarded for Bega-Tathra water treatment plant](#)

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