

Report card for the Upper Namoi River Water Source

Report card 28 of 31

Water source context

Water Sharing Plan:	<i>Namoi and Peel Unregulated Rivers Water Sources 2025</i>
Area:	1,551 km ²
Inflowing water source:	Mid Macdonald River
Receiving water source:	Keepit Water Source

River flows

Flow records:	109 years at North Cuerindi Gauge (419005)
	53 years at Ukolan Gauge (419029)
Stream type:	Perennial

Basic landholder rights

Domestic and stock rights estimate:	211 ML/year
Native title rights:	Nil at commencement of the plan

Licensed water entitlements

Total surface water entitlement:	9,789.5 ML/year	(88 licences)
Unregulated River:	9,747 ML/year	(81 licences)
Domestic and Stock:	42.5 ML/year	(7 licences)

Table 1. Access rules for management zones

Management Zone	Type	Current rules	Proposed rules
Macdonald and Namoi Rivers Management Zone	Cease to take	Take is not permitted when there is no visible flow over the weir crest at Manilla Weir	<p>Take is not permitted when there is no visible flow over the weir crest at Manilla Weir AND/OR when flows are equal to or less than 1ML/day of flow at North Cuerindi gauge (419005).</p> <p>Take is also not permitted when there is no visible flow at the pump site.</p> <p>NOTE: This proposed change also affects the taking of water under an any aquifer access licence in the Namoi Unregulated River Alluvial Management Zone in the Manilla Alluvial Groundwater Source in accordance with Section 38 of the <i>Water Sharing Plan for the Namoi Alluvial Groundwater Sources 2020</i>. Noting at this time there are no aquifer access licence issued in this water source.</p>
Halls Creek Management Zone	Cease to take	Take is not permitted when flows are equal to or less than 1 ML/day at the Ukolan gauge (419029)	<p>Take is not permitted when flows are equal to or less than 2 ML/day at the Ukolan gauge (419029), or there is no visible flow at the pump site.</p> <p>NOTE: This proposed change also affects the taking of water under an aquifer access licence in the Halls Creek Alluvial Management Zone in the Manilla Alluvial Groundwater Source in accordance with Section 38 of the <i>Water Sharing Plan for the Namoi Alluvial Groundwater Sources 2020</i>.</p>
Upper Namoi Tributaries Management Zone	Cease to take	Take is not permitted when there is no visible flow at the pump site	No change

Table 2. Access rules for whole water source

Type	Current rules	Proposed rules
Take from in-river pools	Comply with the gauge-based access rule when there is one AND Take is not permitted when the in-river pool is below full capacity	No change
Take from in-river dam pools	Take is not permitted unless it is consistent with the water supply work approval	No change
Take from off-river pools	Take is not permitted when the off-river pool is below of its full capacity	No change
Exemptions	Some exemptions apply to specific access rules for the water source, including for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and hygiene • Domestic use • Take from a run-off harvesting dam. Specific licences are listed in Schedules 2 and 3 of the plan.	No change

Table 3. Rules for constructing surface water supply works

Type	Current rules	Proposed rules
In-river dams	Not permitted in third or higher order streams in this water source	Not permitted in third or higher order streams in this water source. An exemption for applications for town water supply purposes has been included.

Protection for wetlands	N/A	<p>No new or amended works permitted within or 3km upstream of a Ramsar wetland.</p> <p>No new or amended works permitted within wetlands indicated on the WSP Prescribed Wetlands Map of the draft plan unless there will be no more than minimal harm to the wetland concerned.</p> <p>This rule does not apply to replacement works.</p>
-------------------------	-----	---

Table 4. Water trading (dealing) rules

Type	Current rules	Proposed rules
INTO water source	<p>No net gain. This means trade must occur out of the water source before the equivalent or less can be traded back in.</p> <p>Not permitted into natural off-river pools</p>	No change
WITHIN water source	<p>Not permitted into the Halls Creek Management Zone or the Upper Namoi Tributaries Management Zone</p> <p>Permitted into the Macdonald and Namoi Rivers Management Zone, subject to assessment</p> <p>Not permitted into natural off-river pools</p>	No change
Protection for wetlands	N/A	<p>Not permitted into or within 3 km upstream of a Ramsar wetland.</p> <p>Not permitted into wetlands identified in the WSP Prescribed wetlands map.</p> <p>Trade between licences within the same WSP prescribed wetland is permitted.</p>

Trading covers:

- assignment of rights dealings (trading of a licence)

- share component dealings between water sources (trading of entitlement between water sources)
- water allocation dealings (trading an annual allocation)
- water supply works dealings (relocation of an extraction point).

Key factors for decisions

The risk assessment indicates that the water source has high in-stream values. The identified potential risk from extraction is high for zero flow periods and high for base-flow and low flows.

- This water source has areas of very high naturalness and supports a diverse range of species including. Eel-tailed Catfish, Tusked Frog endangered population, Booroolong Frog, Davie's Tree Frog and Murray Cod.
- There is significant entitlement within this water source, which increases the potential for extraction to impact ecological values.

Access rules

The department is proposing to increase the cease to pump condition in two of the three management zones within this water source.

Increasing cease to pump levels will help reduce zero flow periods, protect critical low flows important for connectivity and instream biodiversity, and improve supply for basic landholder rights.

We are keen to receive feedback on the impacts and benefits of the proposed changes from water users and the community.

Halls Creek Management Zone water access rules

- It is proposed to increase the cease to pump condition in Halls Creek to 2ML/day at the Ukolan gauge (419029). This increase will protect the environmental values within this management zone at periods of base and low flows.
- This proposed change will apply to surface water access licences in the Halls Creek Management Zone of the unregulated river plan and will also affect the take of groundwater in Halls Creek Alluvial Management Zone in the *Water Sharing Plan for the Namoi Alluvial Groundwater Sources 2020*.
- Surface water in the Halls Creek Management Zone of the Upper Namoi River Water Source is highly connected to groundwater in the Halls Creek Alluvial Management Zone of the Manilla Alluvial Groundwater Source.

- The cease to pump condition for groundwater licences in the Halls Creek Alluvial Management Zone of the Manilla Alluvial Groundwater Source is specified in the *Water Sharing Plan for the Namoi Alluvial Groundwater Sources 2020*. Groundwater take is linked to the surface water cease to pump rules that applies to the Halls Creek Management Zone in Section 38 of the *Water Sharing Plan for the Namoi Unregulated and Alluvial Water Sources 2012* (or any relevant replacement plan).
- The proposed increase in the cease to pump condition will apply to groundwater users in Halls Creek Alluvial Management Zone when flows have been at or below that level for 14 or more consecutive days.

Macdonald and Namoi Rivers Management Zone water access rules

- A second cease to pump rule set at 1 ML/day at the Namoi River at North Cuerindi gauge (419005) is proposed to provide additional protection for low flows. The additional cease to pump condition will ensure that environmental values at risk within this water source are protected at periods of base and low flow.
- This proposed change will apply to surface water access licences in the Macdonald and Namoi Rivers Management Zone of the unregulated river plan and will also affect the take of groundwater in Namoi Unregulated River Alluvial Management Zone in the *Water Sharing Plan for the Namoi Alluvial Groundwater Sources 2020*.
- Surface water in the Macdonald and Namoi Rivers Management Zone of the Upper Namoi River Water Source is highly connected to groundwater in the Namoi Unregulated River Alluvial Management Zone of the Manilla Alluvial Groundwater Source.
- The cease to pump condition for groundwater licences in the Namoi Unregulated River Alluvial Management Zone in the Manilla Alluvial Groundwater Source are specified in section 38 of the *Water Sharing Plan for the Namoi Alluvial Groundwater Sources 2020*. Groundwater take is linked to the surface water cease to pump rules that apply to the Macdonald and Namoi Rivers Management Zone in the *Water Sharing Plan for the Namoi Unregulated and Alluvial Water Sources 2012* (or any relevant replacement plan).
- The proposed increase in the cease to pump condition will apply to groundwater users in the Namoi Unregulated River Alluvial Management Zone when flows have been at or below that level for 14 or more consecutive days.

Carryover

- The department is proposing to allow carryover for all domestic and stock access licences and local water utility access licences within the draft plan. In the 2012 plan, carryover for these licence types was only allowed within Peel unregulated river water sources. Now, with these

proposed changes, these licence types within the Namoi unregulated river water sources will benefit from the same access rule. This change aims to maintain internal consistency across all water sources within the draft plan.

Improving protection of wetlands

- The Natural Resources Commission (NRC) have recommended the replacement plan provide better protection for wetlands. The department have developed criteria to identify specific wetlands in the plan area. It is proposed to include rules to improve their protection by prohibiting new water supply works and restricting trades into or upstream of these areas. The prohibition on new works will not apply to replacement works.
- Wetlands identified for improved protection were drawn from multiple datasets including the Long-Term Water Plan, Floodplain Management Plan, Ramsar listing, Directory of Important Wetlands of Australia, Endangered Ecological Communities and any existing list in the 2012 plan.
- A map of the WSP prescribed wetlands identified for this plan is available on the department's website.
- More information on improving the protection of wetlands is available in a fact sheet.

Other key rules – no change proposed

Managing access licences

Each water access licence has its own share component (volume of the licence) and a water allocation account that acts like a bank account where water is credited or debited.

- Water is credited to an account by an available water determination or if water is traded in (purchased) during the year from other licence holders.
- Water is debited from the account when water is extracted from a water source or traded out (sold). Total extraction from a work (pump, bore, etc.) will be measured through metering or logbooks.

Rules for granting access licences

There are limited purposes for which a new licence will be granted. We anticipate that users who need more water will source it from the market. One reason a licence may be granted is for Aboriginal cultural purposes. Aboriginal Cultural Access Licences are permitted to be granted up to a maximum volume of 10 ML/year per licence, subject to assessment.

Other reasons are identified in Section 10 of the Water Management (General) Regulation 2018.

Public exhibition

The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water seeks feedback from the public on the suitability of the proposed rules for this water source.

In particular, we seek your feedback on:

- Proposed additional cease to take condition in the Macdonald and Namoi Rivers Management Zone
- Proposed change to the cease to take condition within the Halls Creek Management Zone
- Proposed change in the cease to take conditions that will apply to groundwater users in the Halls Creek Alluvial Management Zone and Namoi Unregulated River Alluvial Management Zone in Section 38 of the *Water Sharing Plan for the Namoi Alluvial Groundwater Sources 2020*.
- Proposed rules to protect WSP prescribed wetlands including prohibiting new water supply works and trades within or near WSP prescribed wetlands.

A submission form is available on the department's website.

To read the draft *Water Sharing Plan for the Namoi and Peel Unregulated Rivers Water Sources 2025* and supporting fact sheets, please visit the department's [Public Exhibition website](#).