



October 2021 | ISSUE #30

Message to readers

As COVID-19 restrictions begin to ease across NSW, we look forward to resuming in-person stakeholder engagement soon. In the meantime, visit [our website](#) for details of upcoming online events and consultations.

Please continue to take the necessary precautions to protect yourself and your community. Keep up to date with the [latest COVID-19 information and support measures](#).

Opportunity to obtain new water access licences

We are making new water access licences available in 47 groundwater sources across NSW.

The Controlled Allocation Order (Various Groundwater Sources) 2021 presents an opportunity to buy new shares in specified groundwater sources with unassigned water. The Order makes new aquifer access licences available through a tender process.

In many groundwater sources with unassigned water, little or no water trading occurs. New shares are being offered in these groundwater sources to make it easier for new or expanding enterprises to obtain access to groundwater.

You can submit your registration of interest between 1 and 30 November 2021. Visit our website to find out more.

\$330M for regional NSW jobs and water savings



The NSW Government is getting on with the job of delivering its commitments under the Murray-Darling Basin Plan by accelerating \$330 million worth of Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment Mechanism projects.

Recently, Minister for Water, Property and Housing Melinda Pavey and Federal Minister for Resources and Water Keith Pitt announced funding from the Commonwealth Government will be fast-tracked to help deliver five key projects for the regions.

Fast-tracking the works program will boost regional economies, meet the needs of Basin communities and deliver for the environment.

All up it is expected that around 450 direct and 850 indirect jobs will be created as we move into design and construction phases, not to mention the potential for new tourism jobs as connectivity and river health improve. The projects funded for acceleration are:

- Sustainable Diversion Limit offsets in the Lower Murray: Locks 8 & 9 Project
- Yanco Creek Modernisation Project (Modernising Supply Systems for Effluent Creeks Project)
- Murrumbidgee & Murray National Park Project
- Koondrook-Perricoota Flow Enabling Works (part of the Constraints Measures Program)
- Mid-Murray Anabranches Constraints Demonstration Reach (part of the Constraints Measures Program).

[Read more.](#)

Rescoping for a Better Baaka and Better Bidgee



Two of the most significant projects associated with the Murray-Darling Basin Plan are being rescoped following the recent launch of the Better Baaka and Better Bidgee programs by the NSW Government.

Community needs are front and centre of the rescoped Menindee Lakes and Yanco Creek Offtake projects with a commitment made that projects will not proceed without broad community support.

Rather than focusing on individual projects, the programs allow us to take a holistic, system-wide approach to water planning for the benefit of the environment, the community and First Nations people.

There are a range of proposed initiatives such as the Morton Boolka Enhancement, which will investigate options to upgrade the Cawndilla Creek weir and pipeline to maintain a reliable flow of water into Cawndilla Creek. Also, the Menindee Weir modifications proposal, which would improve fish passage connectivity along the lower Darling-Baaka.

Consultation on the Better Baaka and Better Bidgee programs has kicked off, with the first of a series of information and feedback sessions to be held from 1 November.

Visit our website for more information and to join an online information session on [Better Baaka](#) and [Better Bidgee](#)

Last chance to have your say on the draft Greater Sydney Water Strategy

We want to hear your views on the outcomes, strategic directions, and options outlined in the draft Greater Sydney Water Strategy. Use our simple online form to submit your feedback before consultation closes on 8 November 2021.

Increase in harvestable rights for landholders in coastal-draining catchments



From early 2022, landholders in coastal-draining catchments of NSW will be able to capture up to 30% of the average regional rainwater runoff from their property in harvestable right dams built on non-permanent minor streams, hillsides and gullies. The remaining run-off will flow into licensed dams and the local river systems, where it is shared among all water users and the environment.

This increase from a 10% to 30% limit follows a review and community consultation of harvestable right limits in coastal-draining areas of NSW. It will provide landholders in coastal-draining catchments with better access to water storage for specific purposes.

To balance the needs of downstream environments and users, water captured under the increased harvestable right may only be used for domestic and stock use and extensive agriculture. The location of harvestable rights dams will continue to be limited to first- and second-order streams.

The new limit and rules for coastal harvestable rights will come into effect in early 2022. Detailed assessments of each catchment will then be conducted to assess and confirm the 30% limit. A lower or higher limit may be recommended for the catchment depending on its specific characteristics.

We've released a ['What we heard'](#) report that highlights the key themes from community consultation on coastal harvestable rights that took place in early 2021 and the broader review process.

More information explaining the permitted uses and some Frequently Asked Questions can be found on [our website](#).

National Water Week 2021: caring for water and Country



This year's theme for [National Water Week](#) (18 - 24 October) was caring for water and Country. To celebrate and build awareness of water management in NSW, we've shared a range of [new posts](#) and videos online.

If you're interested in knowing more, watch the videos at the following links to learn about [water for the environment](#), see examples of [water quality issues](#) that we monitor, and brush up on your [groundwater](#) knowledge.

Our monthly newsletter is also packed with stories from the work we do, to how you can care for water, communities and the environment. So please keep reading to find out more!

Five great Aboriginal Communities Water and Sewerage projects



The Aboriginal Communities Water and Sewerage Program (ACWSP) aims to deliver better outcomes for Aboriginal communities across NSW. As well as

operating and maintaining the communities' water and sewerage assets, we're working on four upgrade projects to be delivered in 2022, including:

- installing a new chlorine booster system to ensure the community of Summervale has safe and consistently disinfected water
- upgrading the raw water supply at Namatjira and New Merinee
- constructing a new river intake at Jubullum to replace the failing infiltration gallery
- refurbishing the sewerage ponds at Nanima.

For the fifth project, ACWSP is engaging a consultant to complete an asset management review and capital investment plan. This will help give us a baseline for the current state of assets and set priorities for future upgrade projects. We look forward to sharing our progress with you.

Caring for water is caring for Country. Learn more about the [Aboriginal Communities Water and Sewerage Program](#) on our website.

Where is all the water? Collaborating with the NSW Smart Sensing Network on water data



We are investing in an \$850,000 joint research project to help us better understand how water moves across the NSW landscape. Current water data collection methods can lose track of around 25 per cent of water as it travels across our catchments.

We're working with researchers from the University of Sydney, University of NSW, Australian National University and Macquarie University, along with WaterNSW, the Natural Resources Access Regulator and the NSW Smart Sensing Network on the project. Together, we will develop new satellite technology and an on-ground sensor network to create more comprehensive data collection techniques.

The project will build on existing methods and technology to monitor and measure water in our catchments and groundwater sources.

This research will result in a project design, roadmap and prototype model that can eventually be used to ensure that water volume and location is known more precisely and improve how water is shared across communities, industry and the environment.

Read more on the [NSW Smart Sensing Network website](#).

First flows down the Great Darling Anabranch since 2017



Following much-needed rain and high river flows in the north of the Murray-Darling Basin, the Menindee Lakes in western NSW are now full of water and overflowing. The lakes are also full of fish! You can [watch a video of the flows here](#).

In late September, water started being released from Lake Cawndilla to provide flows down the Great Darling Anabranch — its first drink in almost five years. It's expected to take more than eight weeks for this water to flow down the anabranch into the Murray River.

The flow down the anabranch will help Golden Perch migrate to the Murray River as well as provide benefits for vegetation and create feeding grounds for waterbirds along the way. It's also great for the local community.

The flows are being delivered with careful planning and collaboration between water managers from NSW, along with the Commonwealth Environmental Water Office and the local community. The flows will be a combination of operational releases and water for the environment.

To find out more, visit the Commonwealth Environmental Water Office's [website](#), or find updates on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#).

Tracking freshwater catfish and Murray cod

movement in the Gwydir



Our scientists have been working to track how freshwater catfish and Murray cod move around during environmental flows. Working with members of the Department of Primary Industries-Fisheries and the Commonwealth Environmental Water Office, the research project ran from 2016-2020 in the Mehi and Gwydir Rivers.

To monitor fish movement, we tagged fish of each species with acoustic tags, or small sound-emitting devices, so each fish could be detected remotely when it passed an acoustic receiving station. We then built a model that related fish movement to information on environmental flow and water temperature.

We compared the model to periods when planned environmental water was being protected under NSW water sharing plans. These periods included during supplementary events, flows from the environmental contingency allowance in Copeton Dam, protected unregulated tributary flows (3T rule), and a temporary water restriction in early 2020.

We found that more fish moved during supplementary flow events and protected tributary flows than during releases from the dam. This was likely due to the shifts in temperature and water quality during these flows, which would give the fish natural cues to move. We also recorded fish moving up to 52 km during the temporary water restriction event in January-February 2020.

The movement of fish to new river habitats allows native fish to access new food resources and breeding sites, protects genetic diversity and increases the distribution of native fish. Our water management plans and strategies are designed to support these outcomes now and into the future.

Visit [our website](#) for the full report.

Dumaresq Dam works nearing completion



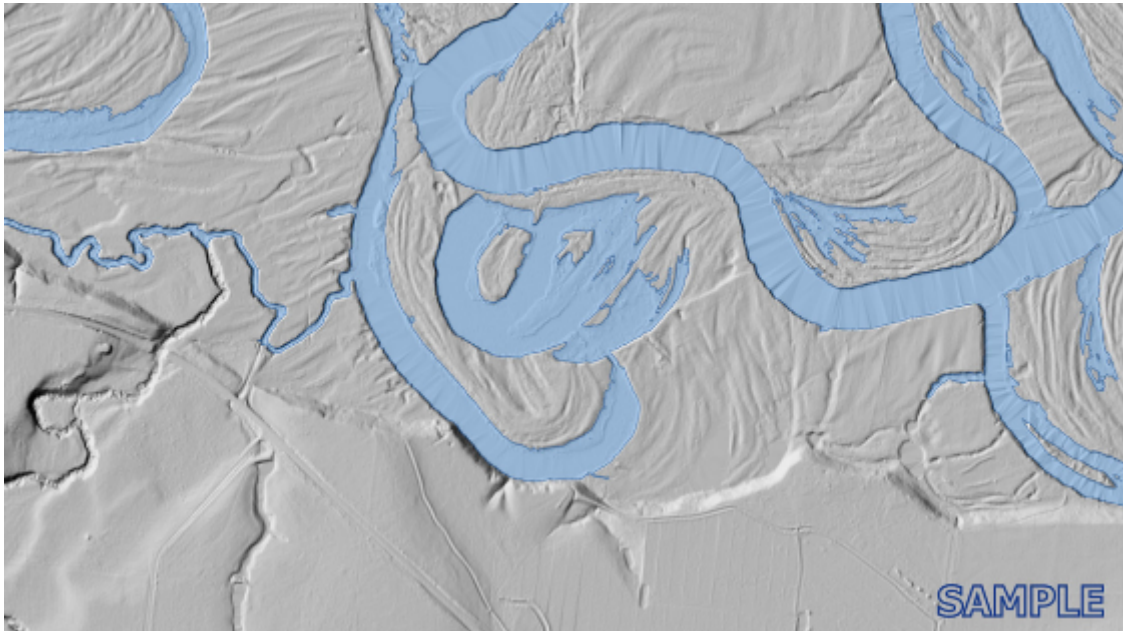
We have invested \$4.05 million under the Safe and Secure Water Program to upgrade the Dumaresq Dam. Co-funded with Armidale Regional Council, the upgrades will bring the 400 ML dam up to the current Australian National Committee on Large Dams (ANCOLD) standards and guidelines.

The safety upgrade work began in January 2021 and includes strengthening the gravity dam wall and increasing the spillway capacity. Once complete, the \$8.1 million project will improve the safety of the dam and enhance the recreational amenity for the Armidale community. The upgrades are due for completion in early 2022.

Originally built in 1896, the dam stopped being used for water supply after the construction of the Malpas Dam in 1971. The Dumaresq Dam now serves the local community and tourists as a popular recreation facility and nature conservation park.

Learn more about the [Safe and Secure Water Program](#).

Reconnecting River Country Program modelling turns up a gear



The Reconnecting River Country Program is completing one of the largest modelling programs in the state to inform flow options assessment.

With funding from the Australian Government, we're using state-of-the-art flow models to map inundation extents associated with flow limit options for the Murray (Hume to Wakool) and Murrumbidgee River project areas.

The flow models use high resolution light detection and ranging (LIDAR) digital terrain models, extensive river channel surveys, high resolution satellite imagery and aerial photography. This means we can present a range of flow options to landholders and the local community to collaboratively assess the benefits and impacts.

Visit the project [website](#) to learn more.

NRAR video helps water users to know the rules around metering



The Natural Resources Access Regulator (NRAR) has released a [new video](#) explaining the rules around the new non-urban water metering rollout. The video supports water users to determine if the new rules apply to them, what they need to do to comply, and where to go to find out more.

Water users with surface water pumps 500 mm and over were required to be compliant by 1 December 2020. The northern inland regions of NSW now have until 1 December 2021 to comply with the new non-urban metering laws and are recommended to act now.

Learn more about NRAR's Know the Rules campaign on [their website](#).

Not sure if you need to comply with the new non-urban metering laws? Use the [NSW Water Metering Guidance Tool](#) to find out.

What happens when water laws are breached?



NRAR is responsible for enforcing NSW's water laws. A key part of its work involves investigating and prosecuting the most serious breaches of these laws. NRAR has commenced more than 30 prosecutions since its beginning in 2018.

NRAR has launched a new interactive map which highlights current matters before the courts.

As the water regulator, NRAR takes a firm but fair approach. Where possible, it works with water users to achieve voluntary compliance. In cases of severe non-compliance, NRAR may decide to proceed with a prosecution, and this decision is never made lightly.

You can view the map and read case studies about past prosecutions on the [NRAR website](#).

Call for registrations - weir pool manipulation infrastructure assessment for the Locks 8 and 9 project



Water Infrastructure NSW is seeking registrations from landowners with private infrastructure that may be affected by the Lower Murray Sustainable Diversion Limits project (better known as the Locks 8 and 9 project).

Part of the [NSW Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment Mechanism](#), several planned activities for the Locks 8 and 9 project will result in changes to how the River Murray is operated. These changes may have an impact on some private infrastructure within the two weir pools.

The project team is looking to contact landholders in the area to discuss these potential impacts, and to better understand how to respond to survey assessments of the area conducted in 2020.

To find out more and register your details, visit the [project webpage](#). Registrations close on Sunday, 14 November 2021 at 11:59pm.

How safe is your dam?



There are thousands of dams in NSW, from small farm dams to huge storages that provide cities and towns with drinking water. All dams, no matter how large or small, must be maintained and operated correctly to remain safe.

If you are a dam owner, you should consider the risks to your dam's structure and how these can be minimised. Make sure that you and any relevant staff, contractors and consultants know the rules that apply to your dam, and the procedures in place to operate and maintain it – including in an emergency or during extreme conditions like a flood.

Owners of NSW's 400 or so declared dams must develop an operations and maintenance plan as part of their dam safety management system. Declared dams are those which could endanger life downstream, or cause major property, environmental or public welfare damage if they were to fail.

The requirements for these operations and maintenance plans are set out in the *Dams Safety Act 2015* and the *Dams Safety Regulation 2019*. You can also get information to prepare, implement and update your plan from Dams Safety NSW.

Visit [our website](#) to learn more about what we do and access resources and guidance.

Drought Recovery

We've added a new section about the 2017-2020 drought to our drought recovery webpage. View the page to learn more about the climate overview and measures implemented during the drought. You can also view our new video that explains the department's drought stage system.

Have your say

Current and upcoming consultations and information events:

Non-urban metering online information sessions

What water users need to know

[Friday 29 October, 12:30 pm – 3:00 pm](#)

Wyangala Dam Wall Raising project

Introduction to project webinars

[Monday 1 November, 5:30 pm – 6:30 pm](#)

Community information webinars

[Tuesday 2 November, 12:00 pm – 12:45 pm](#)

[Thursday 4 November, 5:30 pm – 6:15 pm](#)

Proposed new Dungowan Dam and Pipeline environmental impact statement -

Community information webinars

[Tuesday, 2 November, 9:00 am – 10:30 am](#)

[Tuesday, 2 November, 5:00 pm – 6:30 pm](#)

Better Bidgee Program - information session webinars

[Monday, 1 November, 12:00 pm – 2:00 pm](#)

[Monday, 8 November, 5:00 pm – 7:00 pm](#)

Better Baaka Program - information session webinars

[Wednesday, 3 November, 10:00 am – 12:00 pm](#)

[Wednesday, 10 November, 5:00 pm – 7:00 pm](#)

Draft Greater Sydney Water Strategy

We want to hear your views on the outcomes, strategic directions, and options outlined in the draft Greater Sydney Water Strategy. [Submit your feedback](#) by 8 November 2021.

Planned Locks 8 and 9 project

Stakeholders with private infrastructure that may be impacted by planned Locks 8 and 9 project activities can [register their details](#) for future contact by the project team. Registrations close on Sunday, 14 November 2021.

Water engagement roundup

This monthly webinar provides updates on current consultation and engagement about important water policy and programs. Find the dates for upcoming sessions and recordings of past webinars on [our website](#).

[View all](#)

Latest water news from the department

- [Progress continues for NRAR](#)
- [Improving water conservation made easy](#)
- [NRAR works with illicit tobacco taskforce on latest prosecution](#)

- [Rising river alert – Snowy River below Jindabyne Dam](#)
- [Fairer metering for small water users](#)

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Contact us

Water News is our monthly update on water planning, management and reform in NSW. If you have any questions or feedback contact us at:

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