

Reconnecting River Country Program



About the Reconnecting River Country Program

The Reconnecting River Country Program aims to improve wetland and floodplain connectivity and health of Country by striking a balance between economic, social, cultural and environmental outcomes across southern NSW.

The program focuses on relaxing or removing some of the constraints (i.e. policy, physical or operational barriers) limiting the delivery of water for the environment across the southern-connected Murray-Darling Basin.

Landholders, land managers and communities will see investment in infrastructure and on-farm works, with the potential for improved agricultural productivity due to floodplain flows, as well as improved recreational fishing and tourism.

The program will also potentially deliver a range of outcomes benefitting First Nations communities, such as improved Connection-to-Country.

To date, the NSW Government has collaborated with stakeholders to ensure issues are identified and a suite of measures developed to mitigate any potential effects before making changes to existing rules, policies or infrastructure.

About constraints

In the southern-connected basin, there are a range of constraints or barriers limiting flows along our river systems. These constraints include policy, physical structures (e.g. low-lying bridges and roads) and operational limits for river flows.

As a result of these constraints, rivers connect to floodplains less often than is needed to remain healthy.

Relaxing constraints allows water for the environment to be delivered at higher levels at particular times of year, enabling the more efficient and effective use of water required to achieve the intended environmental outcomes of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan.



Darlington Point, Cookoothama

The program is considering flow limit options in the southern-connected basin, covering:

- Hume to Yarrawonga (Murray River)
- Yarrawonga to Wakool (Murray River)
- Murrumbidgee River.

How is the program different to previous attempts to remove constraints?

The NSW Government has gone back to the drawing board, looked at the lessons learned from previous consultations, and has designed a program focusing on working collaboratively and extensively with the community to meet local needs, using the best available science and modelling.

Improved river flow models and flow maps have been developed to identify affected properties and help communities make informed decisions about the program.

Mitigation measures will be developed collaboratively to address issues identified by affected landholders, and may include new infrastructure, infrastructure upgrades or payment for easements.

What does the program mean for landholders and communities?

Changes to flow management are likely to result in benefits and impacts for stakeholders.

The program is working with a broad range of stakeholders, including landholders, First Nations

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communities, local communities, peak body groups and local councils to ensure issues are identified and measures developed to mitigate potential effects.

Feedback plays a vital role in helping to finalise the inundation mapping and flow options during the next phase of the program.

This will occur before changes to existing rules, policies or infrastructure are considered.

Next steps

A range of flow options are being considered by the program and will be discussed with stakeholders as part of ongoing engagement activities.

Improved inundation mapping was released on 1 July 2022. These new maps provide stakeholders with a clear indication of the extent of possible inundation under the different flow options being considered.

As part of the collaborative approach to development, the program is reaching out to landholders, First Nations people, public land managers and local communities to:

- provide an update on program progress
- seek feedback on flow options and their frequency, timing and duration
- continue conversations about property-scale inundation mapping and appropriate mitigation measures
- discuss the feedback received on several key aspects of the program, such as the proposed Landholder Negotiation Scheme (formerly known as the Landholder Negotiation Framework) and Impact Management Toolbox
- highlight tools to help stakeholders find out more about the program and provide input into program development
- develop a Negotiation Assistance Package to encourage landholder participation in the program negotiation process.

Private landholders owning property in the program area are also invited to participate in an online case study where they can give us their feedback using a web-based map. Landholders can register their interest in taking part via the [program's virtual room](#) or by contacting the project team.

First Nations people and the broader community across the program area can also participate in the program by contacting the project team or [registering for updates](#) about upcoming consultation opportunities.

Acknowledgement

The Department of Planning and Environment acknowledges we stand on Aboriginal land. We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land, and we show our respect for Elders past, present and emerging through thoughtful and collaborative approaches to our work, seeking to demonstrate our ongoing commitment to providing places in which Aboriginal people are included socially, culturally and economically.

Find out more

To find out more about upcoming consultation opportunities please contact us or get in touch with your local engagement officer.

- visit dpie.nsw.gov.au/reconnecting-river-country-program
- phone **1300 081 047**
- email winsw.engagement@dpie.nsw.gov.au
- sign up for [program updates](#)