

Reconnecting River Country Program: Mitigation measures



In the Murray-Darling Basin, there are a range of flow constraints that currently restrict the flexibility of the use of water for the environment. A constraint is any physical, policy or operational barrier limiting the flow of water in river systems. There are a range of flow constraints in the basin, meaning rivers connect to their floodplains less often than is needed to maintain healthy river, wetland and floodplain ecosystems.

Removing or 'relaxing' constraints allows water for the environment to be periodically delivered at higher levels and at more appropriate times providing healthier river and wetland habitats for native vegetation, fish and other fauna.

Higher water for the environment flow options, currently being considered, will result in periodic low-level inundation of public and private land across the program area. These flows occur naturally but with less frequency due to water management and storage.

The [Reconnecting River Country Program](#) is working with landholders, First Nations people and communities to investigate fair and equitable outcomes for those affected by the proposed higher flows. Stakeholder engagement is helping to identify the needs and benefits of those affected and to develop measures to mitigate the impact of proposed flows.

Throughout 2023 we will engage with affected stakeholders to hear feedback on:

- a suite of materials, measures and tools for the Impact Management Toolbox, designed to inform private and public landholders, and other affected parties, on ways that the NSW Government can mitigate the impact of higher water for the environment flow options, currently being considered
- the Landholder Negotiation Scheme, which will provide for transparent, fair, equitable and consistent negotiations with landholders likely to be affected by proposed higher water for the environment flow options, currently being considered.

The program is undertaking stakeholder engagement activities that will inform decisions on changes to existing rules, policies or infrastructure.

How will mitigation measures be developed?

The NSW Government is working with stakeholders to explore and develop mitigation measures that complement existing legislation and ensure affected landholders will be fairly and equitably compensated.

Measures, such as on-farm works, will be designed to be fit-for-purpose for landholders and other stakeholders affected by the establishment of flow corridors for the environment.

We continue to work with landholders, community groups and First Nations communities to introduce and seek feedback on key components of the Impact Management Toolbox. This work builds upon the input already received on the draft mitigation principles from approximately 85 landholders who have already participated in the program.

The toolbox will include information to help affected private landholders and other stakeholders to understand proposed mitigation measures and ensure fair compensation for any impacts arising from the delivery of higher environmental flows, currently being considered.

The toolbox will include:

- a set of agreed mitigation principles
- a list of potential mitigation measures
- tools to support decision making including methodologies for costing mitigation measures, underpinned by the program's modelling
- guidance on negotiating agreements.

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There are three types of mitigations:

- establishing a flow corridor - that allows river operators to deliver higher water for the environment flows, currently being considered, in return for compensation for land affected. In most cases, compensation for easements is likely to be the best option to secure the flow corridor.
- works - funding for works and infrastructure necessary to mitigate the affect of the higher water for the environment flows, for example, on-farm road works or culverts, or protection of farm assets.
- compensation - for other impacts to a farm business, access, inconvenience and maintenance.

Once developed, the mitigation measures will:

- provide the basis for discussions about mitigation between the NSW Government, private and public landholders, and other affected stakeholders
- be tailored to benefit individual businesses and properties affected by higher environmental flows for the environment, currently being considered.

Negotiation assistance will be provided through financial and other support to landholders, leaseholders and third parties in need of support.

How to be involved and have a say?

Engagement with private and public landholders, First Nations people and communities is currently underway.

An [interactive flow option extent mapping tool](#) is available on the program webpage where you can check whether you are affected by the higher water for the environment flow options, currently being considered.

If you are an affected landholder, we want to talk with you. Fill in a [landholder registration form](#) to register your details and participate in the program.

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 admin.rrcp@dpie.nsw.gov.au
- subscribe for updates water.nsw.gov.au/RRCPUpdates