

# Floodplain management plans and the Reconnecting River Country Program

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This document answers frequently asked questions about the development of floodplain management plans and the Reconnecting River Country Program.

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## What is the difference between floodplain management plans and the Reconnecting River Country Program?

The department is delivering multiple programs across the NSW Murray and Murrumbidgee regions. While they do not operate in isolation, the development of floodplain management plans for the Murrumbidgee, Murray, and Billabong Creek are unrelated to the Reconnecting River Country Program.

**Floodplain management plans** are made under the *Water Management Act 2000* and set the rules for the assessment and determination of applications for flood work approvals across a valley-wide floodplain. The rules include what type of flood works can be constructed and where.

Floodplain management plans must consider the risk to life and property from the effects of flooding.

Floodplain management plans *do not* deal with the take of water or delivery of environmental water.

The **Reconnecting River Country Program** forms part of the Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment Mechanism (SDLAM), under the Murray-Darling Basin Plan, which aims to achieve improved environmental outcomes for rivers, wetlands, and wildlife.

The program is currently in development.

The program aims to increase the frequency and extent that rivers connect to wetlands and floodplains, to improve the health of Country in the Murray and Murrumbidgee valleys and make the best use of water for the environment.

The program is proposing to remove constraints in these river systems to establish environmental flow corridors that will enable the flexible use of water for the environment. Relaxing these constraints is critical to achieving the Murray-Darling Basin's Plan's environmental outcomes.

An environmental flow corridor is the area of land that will facilitate environmental flows up to the selected flow option limit. This area of land includes the riverbank, wetlands and low-level floodplain areas which the program aims to inundate more frequently with environmental water to mimic the natural river flow cycles.

## Does the floodway network in a floodplain management plan show where water will go as part of the Reconnecting River Country Program?

No.

The floodway network developed as part of a floodplain management plan is based on **historical** large flood events. The floodway network is comprised of floodways (pathways for fast-flowing floodwater) and the inundation extent (ponding areas). Floodways pose the greatest risk to life and property during times of flood.

The Reconnecting River Country Program is still in development. As part of consultation, a series of proposed environmental flow limit options have been presented through flow extent mapping. These options are unrelated to the floodway network shown in a floodplain management plan.

No environmental flows have been delivered under the Reconnecting River Country Program and no decision has been made on a preferred flow limit option.

The environmental flow limit options being considered under the Reconnecting River Country Program are **below minor flood levels** in most parts of the program area. For example, the highest flow limit option of 40,000 ML/day option being considered in the Murrumbidgee (as measured at the Wagga Wagga gauge) is less than a third of the flow rate of the 2022 flood event (152,000 ML/d).

## Will floodplain management plans require existing flood works be removed?

No.

Floodplain management plans set rules for the assessment and determination of applications for flood work approvals. They do not set requirements for the removal of flood works.

## Will a floodplain management plan require existing unapproved flood works to be approved?

No.

Floodplain management plans set rules for the assessment and determination of applications for flood work approvals. In NSW all flood works require a flood work approval under the *Water*

*Management Act 2000*, unless exempt<sup>1</sup>, regardless of whether a floodplain management plan is in place.

Floodplain management plans provide a streamlined approach to the assessment and determination of applications for flood work approvals.

The department recognises that existing flood works provide many benefits in terms of access and the protection they provide to life and property in times of flood. Floodplain management plans will include a **pathway for the approval of existing flood works** that do not have an approval.

## Will the Reconnecting River Country Program need to comply with a floodplain management plan?

Yes.

Proposed works associated with the Reconnecting River Country Program that are deemed a flood work will *need to comply* with the relevant floodplain management plan to obtain a flood work approval.

Any proposed work that is not a flood work will consider and comply with the relevant floodplain management plan rules and assessment criteria.

Data and information collected as part of the floodplain management planning process is being shared with the Reconnecting River Country Program to ensure consistency wherever possible.

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## More information

For more information about these programs:

- visit the [Reconnecting River Country Program web page](#)
- visit [the Floodplain Management Plan web page](#)
- email [water.enquiries@dpie.nsw.gov.au](mailto:water.enquiries@dpie.nsw.gov.au)
- phone 1300 081 047

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<sup>1</sup> More information on exemptions from the requirement for a flood work approval can be found on [NRAR's website](#).