

The Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment Mechanism

The Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment Mechanism (SDLAM) is a program designed to achieve similar or improved environmental outcomes for rivers, wetlands and wildlife using less water. Part of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan (Basin Plan), SDLAM can be achieved through supply measures, including constraints, or efficiency measures.

In 2017, the Basin states and the Australian Government agreed a package of 36 SDLAM projects across the southern connected Murray-Darling Basin, which aim to recover 605 GL of water each year for the river system.

Of these, the NSW Government is the lead or co-proponent for 21 projects. These projects are being delivered in collaboration with local communities and key stakeholders, including other Basin states, with funding from the Australian Government.

The SDLAM Acceleration Program

To date, 12 of NSW Government's SDLAM projects are complete or nearly complete and are delivering Basin Plan outcomes. The water recovered through these projects is already having positive impacts for Basin communities.

Building on this progress, the NSW Government is bringing forward \$330 million worth of its remaining SDLAM projects through the NSW SDLAM Acceleration Program (the Acceleration Program). This program will remove barriers and streamline construction funding arrangements to allow the delivery of five projects by June 2024.

The projects being accelerated include the:

- Sustainable Diversion Limit offsets in the Lower Murray: Locks 8 & 9 Project
- Yanco Creek Modernisation Project
- Murrumbidgee & Murray National Park Project
- Koondrook-Perricoota Flow Enabling Works Project
- Mid-Murray Anabranches Project.

This Acceleration Program will deliver up to 45 GL of the remaining water savings needed to reach the 605 GL target required by the Basin Plan each year, delivering strong ecological outcomes for the Murray-Darling Basin.

These projects will also play a key role in creating jobs in regional areas, generating an estimated 450 direct and 850 indirect regional jobs, and will provide a much-needed boost to the regional economies where the projects are being delivered.

About the Yanco Creek Modernisation Project

The Yanco Creek Modernisation Project is one of the projects being brought forward through the proposed SDLAM Acceleration Program.

The Yanco Creek System links two of Australia's largest rivers—the Murrumbidgee and Murray, through over 800 km of interconnected waterways.

These local waterways support many important uses including farming, town water supply, native fish and waterbirds and recreation. They also have significant cultural heritage value.

Yanco Creek Modernisation Project

The project will modernise infrastructure, improving water management and enabling the smarter use of water in the Yanco Creek System – including Yanco, Billabong, Colombo and Forest Creeks.

A range of project options are currently being assessed along with social, cultural, environmental and economic considerations including:

- **environmental water efficiency** – maintaining or increasing the efficiency of environmental water delivery using a reduced amount of water to high value environmental areas. Environmental water is water that is allocated and managed specifically to maintain and improve the health of rivers, wetlands and floodplains.
- **Billabong Creek re-regulation weirs** – replacing up to four existing weirs with new fully automated and remote-controlled re-regulation weirs to provide operators with greater flexibility to deliver the right amount of water to the right place at the right time.
- **Yanco Creek / Mendoora Anabranch reconfiguration** – reconfiguring water delivery arrangements in the Yanco Creek / Mendoora Anabranch area.
- **Forest Creek return flows via Piccaninny Creek** – diverting unplanned flows in the Forest Creek downstream of the existing Warriston Weir into Piccaninny Creek and back to the Billabong Creek downstream of Conargo.
- **improved flow measurement** – improving knowledge of how much water is at various locations throughout the Yanco Creek System to help river operators deliver the right amount of water to the right place at the right time.
- **review of irrigation escapes flows** – reviewing how a series of existing privately owned and operated irrigation escapes should be operated to best balance social, environmental, economic and cultural outcomes within the Yanco Creek System.
- **improved use of technology** – using technology to improve the operational efficiency of the Yanco Creek System to help river operators deliver the right amount to where it is needed.
- **improved riparian management** – activities to protect or improve the condition of riparian land (i.e. land alongside creeks, streams, gullies, rivers and wetlands).

Project timelines

The project is currently in the strategic assessment phase. As a result of the Acceleration Program it is anticipated this project will be complete by mid-2024.

Benefits

By accelerating this package of works, the NSW Government will be able to deliver strong environmental and community benefits including:

- keeping the Yanco, Billabong, Colombo and Forest Creeks flowing
- more efficient environmental water delivery
- improved fish passage (e.g. new fish ladders) and habitat
- improved knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal cultural heritage
- improved Connection to Country for Traditional Owners

- an economic, training and employment boost for local communities
- improved levels of services (e.g. more flexible timing to irrigation scheduling).
- a reduced risk of further non-strategic water market purchases from the Southern Connected Basin.

Consultation

The NSW Government will continue to consult with the project's key governance groups including the Yanco Stakeholder Advisory Group and Technical Advisory Group. Community information sessions are scheduled for August 2021 and will continue to be held throughout the life of the project.

More information

For more information on the SDLAM Acceleration Program call 1300 081 047 or visit dpie.nsw.gov.au/sdlam

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