

# Reconnecting River Country Program: Flow options



## Focus on flows

Healthy rivers supply water to homes, farms, schools and businesses. Along the way, they nourish ecosystems and provide important habitat for native plants and animals.

At present, a range of constraints (physical, policy and operational) limit the flow of water for the environment along river systems in the southern-connected Murray-Darling Basin.

The timing, frequency, extent and duration of these flows has a powerful effect on the landscape and the thousands of species that call it home.

Smaller flows stay within the river channel. Slightly higher flows reach higher up channel banks, and in some areas, spread into floodplain creeks and billabongs; reconnecting the wetlands and providing important habitat for local wildlife.

Current managed flow limits in the southern-connected basin are capped at relatively low levels. This means rivers and floodplains are connecting less often than they once did and need to be.

The Reconnecting River Country Program is an opportunity to consider a broader range of operational flow limits to provide greater flexibility in the Murray and Murrumbidgee River systems.

By allowing more flexibility in the delivery of flows, water managers will be able to:

- reinstate some natural flow patterns
- trigger breeding and movement of native fish, waterbirds and other water-dependent animals
- release and transfer carbon and nutrients underpinning the aquatic food web
- enhance native fish populations and support healthy river and wetland ecosystems
- improve the health of forests, woodlands and shrublands along river corridors and on low-lying floodplains.



Darlington Point, Cookoothama.

## Flow limits being assessed

Flows of different sizes and duration will achieve a range of outcomes for river and wetland health, connectivity, productivity and wildlife.

In collaboration with stakeholders, the program is assessing a range of flows to investigate benefits, costs and risks to ensure evidence-based decisions are made on preferred flow limits across the program areas.

The flow options being investigated will be used as the basis for:

- modelling inundation footprints
- assessing community benefits and impacts
- assessing environmental benefits and risks
- measuring outcomes for First Nations communities
- identifying opportunities and mitigation measures.

This phase of the program involves collaboration with landholders participating in case studies, First Nations communities, public land holders, local regional community groups, peak body groups and local councils across the Murray and Murrumbidgee Valleys.

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Through this process, landholders and communities will have the opportunity to provide feedback on flow limit options. Alongside flow options, landholders will also have the opportunity to consider a suite of mitigation measures.

The following flows are currently being assessed in the Murray and Murrumbidgee program areas, noting other flows within these ranges could be explored in the future.

## **Murray - Hume to Yarrowonga (flows reported at Doctors Point gauge).**

- 25,000 ML/d – current operational limit in the Water Sharing Plan (WSP)
- 30,000 ML/d – flow limit option
- 40,000 ML/d – flow limit option.

## **Murray - Yarrowonga to Wakool Junction (flows reported at downstream of Yarrowonga Weir)**

- 15,000 ML/d (current temporary operational limit)
- 25,000 ML/d – flow limit option
- 30,000 ML/d – flow limit option
- 40,000 ML/d – flow limit option
- 45,000 ML/d – flow limit option.

## **Murrumbidgee River (flows reported at Wagga Wagga)**

- 22,000 ML/d (current temporary operational limit)
- 32,000 ML/d – flow limit option
- 36,000 ML/d – flow limit option
- 40,000 ML/d – flow limit option.

The preferred flow limit options for the program will not be determined until the full impact-benefit assessment, evaluation (through the Options Evaluation Framework) and stakeholder consultations are complete.

For more information about the frequency, timing and duration of flow options, contact your local engagement officer.

## Acknowledgement

The Department of Planning and Environment and the Department of Regional NSW's Local Land Services acknowledge 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. We seek to demonstrate our ongoing commitment to providing places in which Aboriginal people are included socially, culturally and economically.

## Find out more

For more information about the program:

- visit [dpie.nsw.gov.au/reconnecting-river-country-program](https://dpie.nsw.gov.au/reconnecting-river-country-program)
- phone **1300 795 299**
- email [admin.rrc@lts.nsw.gov.au](mailto:admin.rrc@lts.nsw.gov.au)