

Replacing the Water Sharing Plan for the Namoi and Peel Unregulated Water Sources 2012

The Water Sharing Plan for the Namoi and Peel Unregulated Rivers Water Sources 2025 will replace the previous 2012 plan. This document answers frequently asked questions about proposed changes to the plan.

What is a water sharing plan?

Water sharing plans are statutory plans made under the *NSW Water Management Act 2000*. The rules in the plans allow equitable sharing of water for all water uses, including the environment. The plans have a statutory timeframe of 10 years. The purpose of a water sharing plan is to:

- provide water users with a clear picture of when and how water will be available for extraction
- protect the fundamental environmental health of water sources
- ensure our water sources are sustainably managed in the long term.

The plans clearly define the rules for sharing in the available water in a water source. They also provide irrigators and farmers with continuing or 'perpetual' licences that have a title separate from the land, enabling better water trading opportunities. In addition, plans set out requirements for basic landholder rights – domestic and stock rights, harvestable rights and native title rights.

Water sharing plans support the long-term health of rivers and aquifers by making water available specifically for the environment.

Why is the Namoi and Peel Unregulated Rivers plan being replaced?

NSW water sharing plans are valid for 10 years and are subject to a review by the NSW Natural Resources Commission (the commission). The responsible minister may extend or replace a plan on consideration of the recommendation of the commission.

In 2023, the commission completed its review of the *Water Sharing Plan for the Namoi and Peel Unregulated Rivers Water Sources 2012* and recommended the plan be replaced. The department has prepared a draft replacement plan for consultation – the *Draft Water Sharing Plan for the Namoi and Peel Unregulated Rivers Water Sources 2025*.

The draft replacement plan includes several changes including some recommended by the commission.

How will the department consult on the replacement water sharing plan?

Stakeholder input is critical to the development of water sharing plans in NSW. We are consulting the community through:

- public information and consultation webinar session
- drop-in sessions
- one-on-one sessions on request
- public submissions

The plan will be on public exhibition from 4 November to 13 December 2024. You can have your say by attending the public online webinar on 18 November and completing the submission form available from the department's website. Face to face 'drop-in' sessions are being held in Manilla between 10 am and 12 pm and at Dungowan between 2 pm and 4 pm on the 26th November for stakeholders to discuss the proposed changes with department staff, share local knowledge and provide feedback as part of the community consultation process.

Is there a limit on how much water I can take with my licence?

Water Access Licences show the amount of entitlement that you have – called the share component. This share component can be expressed as ML/year or a number of 'unit shares' in the available water resource. The amount of water you can take is based on your licenced share component, the available water determination (AWD) and your account management rules and any relevant conditions on your access licence. An AWD is made at least on 1 July each year. The AWD sets out a volume of water per share that will be placed into your water allocation account at the start of a water year (1 July) or a % of the entitlement volume if share component is in ML/year. This is called an allocation. You can only take the volume of water that is in your water account, in accordance with the rules in the water sharing plan and any relevant conditions on your access licence.

Are changes proposed to rules governing when I can take surface water?

There are proposed changes to access rules in the following water sources:

- Mid Macdonald water source
- Upper Peel water source
- Upper Namoi water source

Access rules do not apply to take under basic landholder rights. For more information about when you can take water and when you can't, go to the report cards for the Namoi and Peel Unregulated Rivers Draft Water Sharing Plan 2025 on the department's website.

Are changes proposed to rules governing when I can take groundwater in the Namoi area? Why?

Proposed changes to surface water access rules for unregulated licence holders will also affect access to groundwater under aquifer access licences in the following management zones in the Manilla Alluvial Groundwater Source:

- Halls Creek Alluvial Management Zone and
- Namoi Unregulated River Alluvial Management Zone

Surface water in these areas is highly connected to groundwater.

The cease to pump condition for groundwater licences in the Halls Creek Alluvial Management Zone and the Namoi Unregulated River Alluvial Management Zone of the Manilla Alluvial Groundwater Source is specified in Section 38 of the *Water Sharing Plan for the Namoi Alluvial Groundwater Sources 2020*. The rules are linked to the surface water cease to pump rules in the *Water Sharing Plan for the Namoi Unregulated and Alluvial Water Sources 2012* (or any relevant replacement plan).

No other changes to groundwater access in the Namoi area are proposed.

Does the draft plan propose changes to the estimated water requirements for basic landholder rights and licensed take?

We have updated the estimated water requirements for basic landholder rights. We have also updated the total volumes or unit shares specified in the share components of all access licences to reflect current information.

Are changes proposed to rules governing trading licence shares or water allocations?

There are changes proposed to trade rules for water shares and allocations in the Pian Creek Water Source. For more information about these changes, go to the proposed changes fact sheet, or view the report cards on the department's website.

How can I obtain a licence or additional water for a commercial enterprise?

New or additional licence shares or allocations may be acquired through the water market. The plan establishes rules governing buying and selling shares and allocations within and between water sources.

More information

The draft water sharing plan and other fact sheets are available on the [department's Water website](#).