

Reconnecting River Country Program

About the program

- The Reconnecting River Country Program forms part of the Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment Mechanism, it is a notified supply and constraints project. Delivering the program will help minimise further water buybacks from Murray and Murrumbidgee communities.
- The program is critical to achieving the objectives of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan and essential to creating healthier functioning river systems in the Murray and Murrumbidgee valleys.
- It aims to connect rivers to wetlands with environmental water to improve environmental outcomes for rivers, wetlands and wildlife, making the best use of existing water recovered from communities.
- Currently, these rivers connect to wetlands and floodplains less often than is needed to maintain healthy ecosystems, due to river regulation and extraction.
- The program is still in development. No flows have been delivered under the program and no decisions have been made to select a flow option.
- The flow options being considered represent upper flow limits and may not be the target for all future environmental flow deliveries.
- Frequency, timing and duration of proposed future environmental flows are important considerations.
- The frequency, timing and duration of environmental flows would vary over time according to climate conditions, water availability, ecological priorities, and river operation requirements and risks.
- On average, it is anticipated that these environmental flows would be delivered about 3 to 5 years per decade, for 3 to 5 days at the peak flow (selected flow option), followed by a gradual recession. Most releases would occur between the months of August and October.

For more information visit the [program webpage](#) or view the [About the program fact sheet](#).

Current status

- The Australian Government has committed \$274 million to extend the program to December 2026.
- With this investment the NSW Government can make significant progress to relax the constraints to environmental flow delivery in the Murrumbidgee, after years of planning and working with the community.
- The funding will enable the program to:
 - deliver a Murrumbidgee Final Business Case, including a recommended flow option for program delivery

- begin important early works to support environmental flow delivery, including replacing ageing regulators in the Werai Forest and raising critical low-lying public infrastructure including Mundarlo Bridge near Gundagai and Mundowry Lane near Collingullie
 - continue work to secure a flow corridor in the Murrumbidgee River system to deliver environmental flows in accordance with the Murrumbidgee River Water Sharing Plan
 - collaborate further with river operators, environmental water managers and stakeholders to improve river management operations, systems and procedures
 - progress technical studies in the Murray River system to inform a future final business case.
- While the funding enables the program to make significant progress by December 2026, full delivery of the program will require more time and funding. Delivery timelines will be set out in the final business cases for the Murrumbidgee and Murray.

For more information view the [funding announcement](#).

Current status in the Murray program area

- The funding agreement will support the program to continue progressing technical studies in the Murray to inform a future final business case, including hydraulic modelling, environment benefits and risk assessments and climate change and salinity impact assessments.
- The program will also progress an early works package in the Werai Forest to improve the delivery of water for the environment ahead of full program delivery.
- This early works package will improve fish passage, the health of Country for First Nations people and provide greater flexibility of environmental flows to the NSW Central Murray Forests Ramsar wetlands.
- The NSW Government is committed to working with the Murray-Darling Basin Authority and Basin states on the development of the Constraints Implementation Roadmap. The roadmap will provide the collective framework to delivering constraints in the Murray.
- It is important for us to understand the outcomes of the Australian Government's constraints roadmap, before proceeding to final business case development.

Program benefits

- The program has the potential to create healthier river systems providing generational benefits for local communities and the broader Murray-Darling Basin community.
- Greater flexibility to manage water for the environment would provide a range of benefits for native vegetation, native fish, waterbirds, turtles, frogs and other wildlife.
- If this program is not delivered there will not only be costs to the environment through ongoing decline in health and loss of biodiversity, but also to community who have less consumptive water accessible for primary production.
- Healthier habitats mean more food to support our native wildlife, while improved flow patterns provide more opportunities for plants and animals to reproduce.
- The program will also potentially deliver benefits to regional economies in southern NSW.

- Implementation of the program would also deliver a range of outcomes benefitting First Nations communities, such as improved connection between healthy Country and a healthy, vibrant and sustainable First Nations culture and community.

For more information view the [Environmental Risk Analysis reports](#)

Flow options

- To achieve the program's goal, the NSW Government is proposing the delivery of flexible environmental flows across the program area.
- The flow extent mapping provides the extent of different flow options being considered by the program.
- The flow options being considered by the program are being discussed with landholders, First Nations communities and other stakeholders. These flow options represent upper flow limits and may not be the target for all future environmental flow deliveries.
- Frequency, timing and duration of proposed future environmental flows are important considerations.
- The frequency, timing and duration of environmental flows would vary over time according to climate conditions, water availability, ecological priorities, and river operations requirements and risks.
- On average, it is anticipated that these deliveries would occur about 3 to 5 years per decade, for 3 to 5 days at the peak flow (selected flow option), followed by a gradual recession. Most releases would occur between the months of August and October.

For more information visit the [flows options webpage](#) or view the [About flow options fact sheet](#).

Flow option modelling

- Comprehensive hydraulic modelling, checked against satellite imagery and aerial photography collected during several high flow events, has been used to develop interactive maps showing the estimated upper limits of the flow options (with buffer) being considered by the program.
- This interactive mapping can be viewed at water.nsw.gov.au/rrcp-inundation-mapping. It enables landholders and other stakeholders to get a greater understanding of the periodic and low-level inundation along the proposed flow corridors that would occur during future environmental flow deliveries.

For more information on the inundation modelling visit the [inundation mapping webpage](#) or view the [Improved modelling to inform decision making fact sheet](#) and [inundation modelling webinar recording](#).

What this means for landholders and communities

- The program has the potential to deliver benefits to regional economies in southern NSW.
- As the program progresses to delivery, landholders, with property in the proposed flow corridors, will have a fair and reasonable opportunity to negotiate voluntary enduring

agreements. The draft Landholder Negotiation Scheme Regulation is the proposed framework for negotiating agreements. These agreements will address impacts to their property on just terms.

- If the program proceeds to delivery, investment in infrastructure could deliver benefits to landholders, community and First Nations communities through improving access and connection and contributions to healthy Country.

Engaging with landholders and stakeholders

- As part of the program's development, we have been meeting with landholders to seek valuable feedback to help shape the program's design.
- Since 2021, the program has actively engaged a broad range of stakeholders from across the Murray and Murrumbidgee program areas. Communications has reached landholders through multiple channels and formats including direct mail letters and flyers, posters and handouts, fact sheets, electronic direct mail (eDM), traditional and digital media advertising in print and radio, social media, webinars, videos and online consultation tools, website, media releases and phone, email and SMS outreach.
- Our stakeholder engagement has included the sharing of program information, seeking feedback to inform program development and to increase our understanding of the potential impacts and benefits of the flow corridors being proposed.
- Individual property-scale engagements and engagement with public authorities is helping us understand the benefits and impacts of the program and mitigations.
- We have shared and collected information from landholders using both online and face-to-face engagements and surveys.
- Engagement to date has included:
 - program introduction and overview
 - environmental Benefits and Risk Analysis of investigated flow options
 - flow timing, frequency and duration of considered flow options
 - on-ground validation of flow model outputs
 - introduction to securing the flow corridor, including identifying assets, impacts and potential mitigation options
 - flow option sentiment surveys.
- Affected landholders have also been engaged through landholder reference groups where each member represents at least five affected landholders. These groups road test the program's methodologies.
- The program's advisory committee represents a large diversity of interest groups and road tests the program's methodologies and key products.
- On-Country assessments with First Nations people helps us to understand the value of places, program impacts and benefits and potential outcomes of the program through identification of appropriate works and measures.

- First Nations reference group engagement comprises representatives from across the program area. This group has assisted to establish the First Nations vision for the program along with review methodologies to mitigate impacts and realise benefits.

Landholder registration

- Landholders within the proposed flow corridors can register to participate in the program by completing the [landholder registration form](#).

Information hub

- Find out the latest information and resources, including frequently-asked-questions, technical studies and reports, fact sheets and webinars on the [program's information hub](#).

Ask a question and subscribe for updates

- Landholders and other stakeholders can ask a question about the program via the [ask a question](#) form.
- Stakeholders can also register to receive email updates from the program via the [subscribe for updates](#) form.

More information

For more information on the program:

- visit dpie.nsw.gov.au/reconnecting-river-country-program
- email water.enquiries@dpie.nsw.gov.au
- phone 1300 081 047