



Critical water planning for the Murray Valley

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CURRENT WATER AVAILABILITY

There has been widespread rainfall throughout the Murray Valley during the past month, which has produced some minor inflows into Murray Valley storages. There has also been some improvement in water availability in the Snowy System, which will result in additional water being transferred into the Murray Valley during the year.

Rainfall over the past month was generally average, although there have been some good falls in the western part of the NSW Murray Valley in the past two weeks.

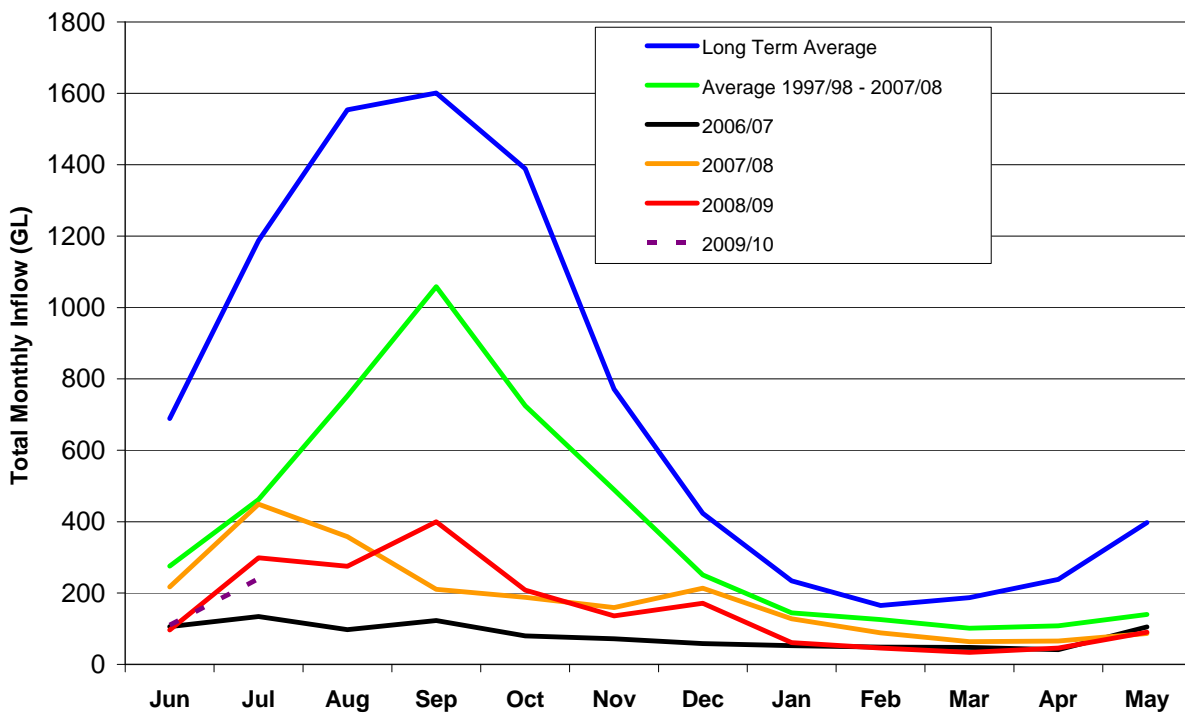
From 11 June to 13 July, Thredbo Village received 190 millimetres (mm); which is 120 per cent of the July average, Albury 52.6 mm; 80 per cent of the July average, Deniliquin 35.1 mm; 30 per cent of the July average, and Mildura 26.3 mm; 90 per cent of the July average. The outlook for the coming months is for average or just below average rainfall, with the potential for an El Nino developing.

The following table shows Murray Valley storage levels as at 13 July 2009.

Storage @ 13 July 2009	Volume (GL)	Percent of capacity	Change (GL) in Volume since 11 June	Volume at this time last year
Hume Dam	416	14	+183	554
Dartmouth Dam	860	22	+28	710
Menindee Lakes	239	14	+17	536
Lake Victoria	255	38	+78	306
Total volume	1770		+306	2106

There is also a considerable volume of water stored in the Murrumbidgee Valley that will be transferred into the Murray Valley in 2009/10.

INFLOW GRAPH



- Current inflows are in the broken purple line
- Inflows in 2008/09 were higher than record low levels in 2006/07, but less than this time last year.

WHAT THIS MEANS

The improvement in water availability has enabled:

- all licence holders have access to 100 per cent of their carryover from 2008/09
- a three per cent allocation for high security entitlement holders
- conveyance water requirements for 2009/10 have been met.

In 2009/10 each state will increase access to carryover at the same rate. After conveyance water has been met, inflows will continue to be shared until each state has access to a further 25 gegalitres (GL) of water.

Following this, each state will be required to commence the repayment of any imbalances that have occurred in water accounting during this period of water sharing, which may mean that water availability in Victoria will increase, while water availability in NSW does not.

NSW has considerably less water available for consumptive use now than at this time last year because of the low volumes in the Menindee Lakes system.

Town water supply authorities have been requested to impose level 4 water restrictions. This request is consistent with the Murray and Murrumbidgee town water restrictions policy that was developed as an outcome of advice from the Critical Water Advisory Group.

Level 4 restrictions will be required until the high security allocation exceeds 20 per cent of entitlement. Councils may purchase water on the open market if they wish to relax water restrictions to level 3a (maximum of four hours of outside watering per week) before the 20 per cent trigger is reached.

The request applies to all towns where the water supply is drawn from the regulated Murray River or from its associated aquifers.

The Department is continuing to take a very conservative approach to managing ground and surface water. Groundwater levels in deep aquifers across the Murray and the Murrumbidgee are declining because of reduced recharge from rainfall and the long period of time since a flood occurred. There is generally close connectivity between the surface and shallower groundwater systems

Modelling of the Upper Murray Groundwater Management Area shows that the Murray River is a significant source of water for the aquifer. Therefore, any growth in groundwater extraction comes immediately from the river. For this reason, the water restrictions apply to private domestic bores and to towns that are supplied by groundwater.

MID-MURRAY TRIBUTARIES

The provision of flows for stock and domestic purposes in the tributaries of the Murray is a high priority. However, while water availability continues to be low, the needs of **all sections** of the Murray Valley community must be considered and balanced. Therefore, flows into the NSW mid-Murray tributaries will continue to be provided in replenishments until sufficient water is available to meet high security needs and provide a general security allocation.

MANAGEMENT OF THE MENINDEE LAKES

While there are continuous flows in the Barwon-Darling River from the Queensland border to Menindee, these flows are small and will not significantly improve water availability in the Darling River.

The water currently stored in the Menindee Lakes system is being reserved to guarantee the continuity of water supply to Broken Hill and to deliver high security allocations and carryover in the Lower Darling Valley throughout 2009/10.

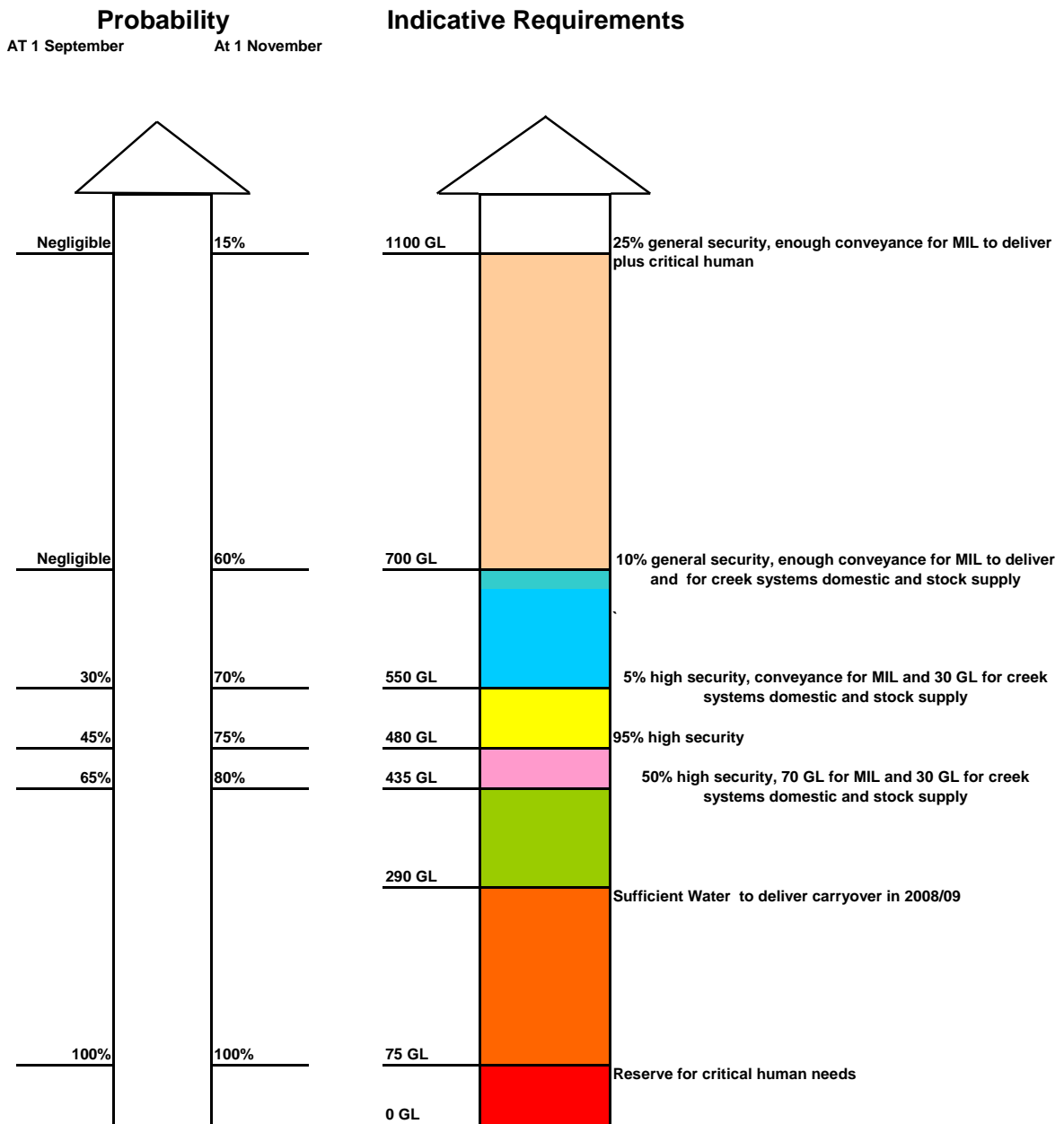
COMPLIANCE

The Department of Water and Energy's Drought Contingency Planning Program will only work if everyone adheres to the restrictions and is careful with **all** water use. To ensure that the system is run fairly, the community should report any suspected breaches to the Department's Compliance Unit on 1800 633 362 or by email to watercompliance@dwe.nsw.gov.au. All reports are confidential.

WATER AVAILABILITY OUTLOOK

The figures that have been used to calculate this diagram are based on dry tercile (driest 1/3 of years) and are very conservative. The volumes on the “rocket” are indicative only and may change depending on the priority of access following stakeholder feedback.

□ NSW Murray Valley Outlook As at 15 July 2009



NOTE: The volumes above are indicative only, they may change depending on when improvements occur and if they are accompanied by heavy local rain.

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