

Wednesday, 16 April 2008

RECORD DRY CONTINUES TO IMPACT SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Minister for the River Murray Karlene Maywald says there is now a 50 percent chance opening allocations for the 2008-09 irrigation season will be above zero but less than four percent.

“The latest end of March information from the Murray-Darling Basin Commission shows that worsening conditions across the Basin have further impacted upon the forecast available resource and therefore reduced the opening allocation projection for 1 July 2008,” Minister Maywald said.

“The opening allocation will depend on rainfall in the catchment between now and the end of the water year.

“By mid-May we will have a clearer picture of how the 2008-09 water year will begin, including flows and likely opening allocations.”

At this stage, South Australia has been allocated 1070 gigalitres in 2007-08 – the lowest volume in more than 50 years.

Inflows to the River Murray system during March were 62 gigalitres, compared with the average of about 200GL.

“Since the end of February there has been no improvement in the amount of water available to South Australia,” Minister Maywald said.

“This is due to the very hot and dry conditions experienced during March, which resulted in very low inflows and high water loss increased drawdown and evaporation.

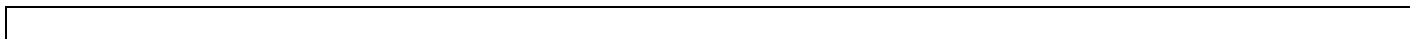
“As a result, irrigation allocations for the rest of 2007-08 will remain unchanged at 32 percent in South Australia.

“Our 1070GL allocation for 2007-08 includes 350GL for consumption and 720GL for dilution flow and losses.”

Current flows over the border to South Australia are 2300 megalitres per day (ML/day), compared with the normal April entitlement flow of 4500 ML/day. About 1400 ML/day is flowing over Lock 1.

“Flows were increased during February and March to meet demand during hot weather, yet they were still well below the average.

“While salinity levels above Lock 1 remain low, salinity below Lock 1 remains high because of low flows.



“Salinity at Murray Bridge averaged 840 EC last week, compared to 400 EC in early April last year. Salinity in Lake Alexandrina averaged 3 700 EC (compared to 1 550 EC in early April last year), although in some parts, levels are much higher.

“Currently, the water level in Lake Alexandrina is minus 0.49m AHD (mean sea level) compared to about plus 0.17m AHD in early April last year. Lake Albert is currently about minus 0.5m to minus 0.6m AHD.

A new frequently asked question document, titled *Water entitlements, setting allocations and accounting for losses* is available from the Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation. Visit www.dwlbc.sa.gov.au/murray/drought/index.html or contact the Drought Hotline on 180 2020 for more information.

