



Critical water planning for the Murrumbidgee Valley

Issue 33 | 15 March 2010

Current water availability

The heavy rainfall that occurred in early March has fallen mainly across the plains of the Riverina and downstream of the storages, and has resulted in little improvement in water availability. The very heavy rainfall that occurred around Wagga on the weekend of 6/7 March has resulted in some high local run-off and flooding in the Kyeamba and Tarcutta Creeks, and has added to flows in the Murrumbidgee River downstream of the storages. A period of supplementary access was announced for the Murrumbidgee River, downstream of Wagga, from 9 March 2010.

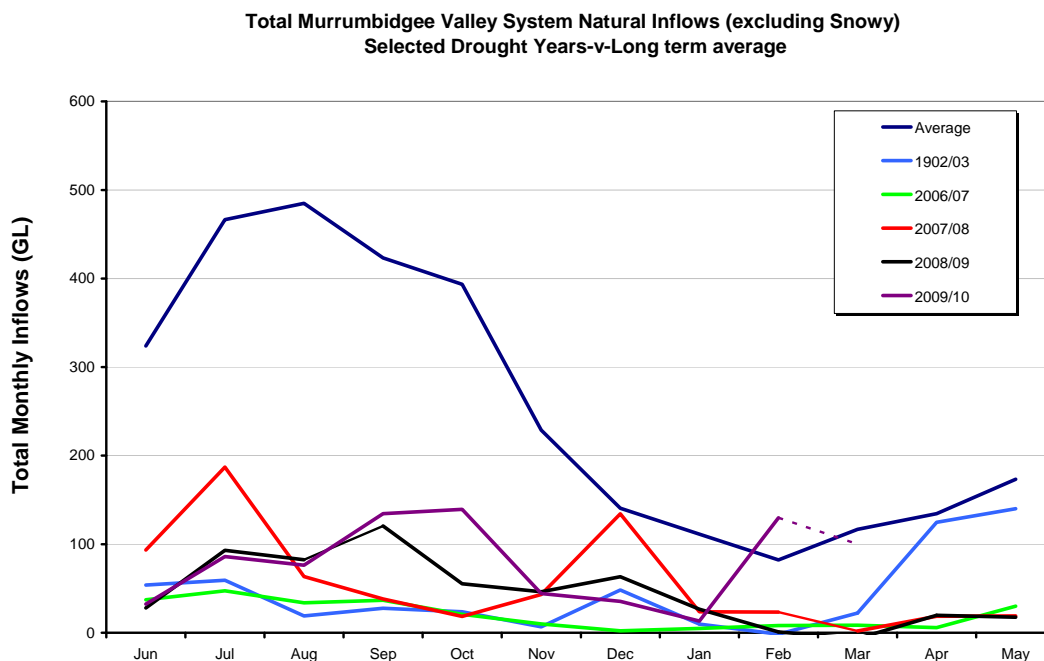
While inflows to the dams have been small, the rainfall has “wet up” the catchment, providing potentially better conditions for future inflows than have been seen over the past decade.

| Location | From 12 – 28 Feb (mm) | From 1-11 March (mm) | Total (mm) | Long term March average (mm) | % of March average |
|---------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|------------|------------------------------|--------------------|
| Thredbo Village | 162.7 | 109.1 | 271.8 | 103.2 | 263 |
| Gundagai (Ridge St) | 50.8 | 93.6 | 144.4 | 43.6 | 331 |
| Griffith | 30.0 | 61.4 | 91.4 | 32.2 | 284 |
| Hay | 52.4 | 67.8 | 120.2 | 28.7 | 419 |

The following table shows Murrumbidgee Valley storage levels as at 11 March 2010 and compares these volumes with those at this time last month and this time last year.

| Storage @ 11 March 2010 | Volume (GL) | Percent of capacity | Change in Volume from this time last month (GL) | Approximate volume at this time last year (GL). |
|-------------------------|-------------|---------------------|---|---|
| Burrinjuck Dam | 468 | 45.4 | +81 | 510 |
| Blowering Dam | 544 | 32.3 | +59 | 506 |
| Total | 1012 | | | |

Inflow graph



What this means

The small increase in water availability in the Murrumbidgee Valley means that the General Security allocation will increase by 2 per cent to 26 per cent of entitlement. There is also enough water reserved to ensure that all critical human needs and carryover can be delivered throughout the 2010/11 water season.

The NSW Office of Water will make the final allocation announcement for this water year on 1 April 2010.

All improvements after that date will be reserved for the 2010/11 water year.

Carryover

The Murrumbidgee Water Sharing Plan remains suspended and will be re-introduced when water availability improves sufficiently to have secured high security entitlements, including town water supply and critical human needs, for 2010/11 and 2011/12.

Until then, carryover rules in the Murrumbidgee Valley will remain as they have for the past two years. Licensed high and general security and conveyance entitlement holders will be allowed to carryover any unused water from 2009/10, up to 30 per cent of their entitlement.

Water use in 2010/11, which includes allocation plus carryover and any water traded out, will be limited to 95 per cent of entitlement, unless additional water is purchased in during that year.

Trade

A third ballot to enable 60 gigalitres or 60,000 megalitres of water to be traded out of the Murrumbidgee Valley closed on Monday, 8 March 2010.

The ballot was oversubscribed by 16,500 megalitres. The full 60,000 megalitres was allocated.

The recent rain has meant that the outstanding Intervalley Trade Account will not be cleared in 2009/10.

There will be no further trade ballots this water year.

Environmental flow management

In November 2006, water credited to the *Murrumbidgee Environmental Water Account* was “borrowed” to secure the delivery of critical human needs in the Murrumbidgee Valley. This account has been slowly repaid over the past two years, with the remaining balance being re-credited on 1 March 2010.

Some of this water may be used in the current water year for environmental purposes. Any unused water may be carried over for use in 2010/11. If access to carryover needs to be restricted, this will apply equally to all carryover water, including environmental water.

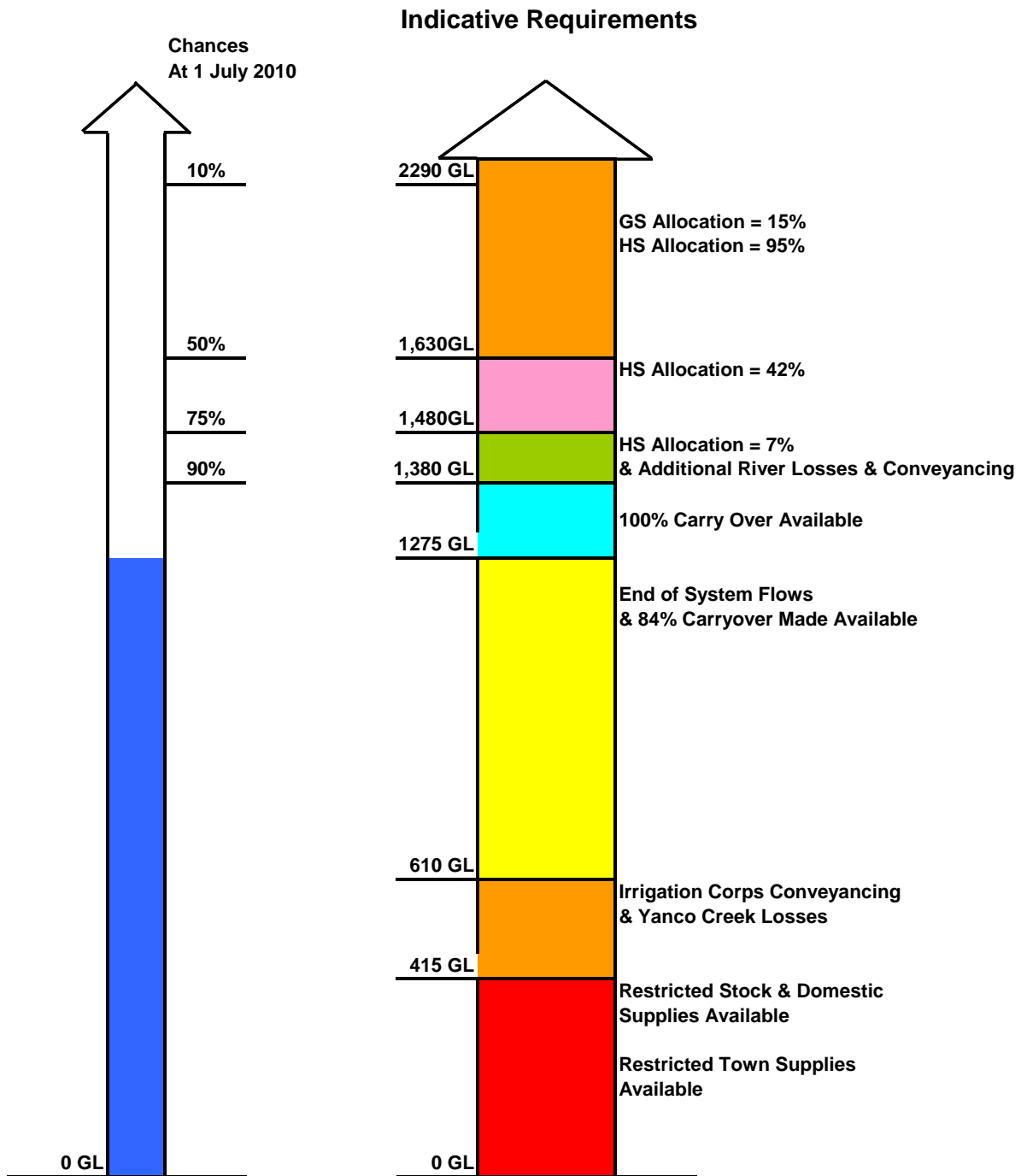
Surplus flow events that are too small to be distributed via supplementary flow announcements will be made available for environmental purposes.

Discussions with the critical water advisory group will be commenced in the near future to provide input to the on-going sharing rules for current flows, until the plan re-commences.

Compliance

The NSW Office of Water’s Drought Contingency Planning Program will only work if everyone adheres to the restrictions where these apply and is conservative with **all** water use. To ensure that the system is run fairly, the community should report any suspected breaches to the NSW Office of Water’s Compliance Unit via phone 1800 633 362 or by email to watercompliance@dwe.nsw.gov.au All reports are treated confidentially.

Murrumbidgee Valley Indicative Outlook



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