



Critical water planning for the Murrumbidgee Valley

Issue 34 | 15 April 2010

Current water availability

There has been below average rainfall over the past month which has resulted in little improvement in available water to the Murrumbidgee Valley. Inflows to dams and tributary inflows to the rivers have receded to low levels.

The final allocation announcement for the 2009/10 water year was made on 1 April. Any further improvements will now be set aside to secure allocations in the 2010/11 water year.

There is sufficient water now reserved to deliver all critical human needs and full carryover from 1 July 2010. Users in the Murrumbidgee and Coleambally Irrigation Corporations should seek advice from those companies about delivering carryover.

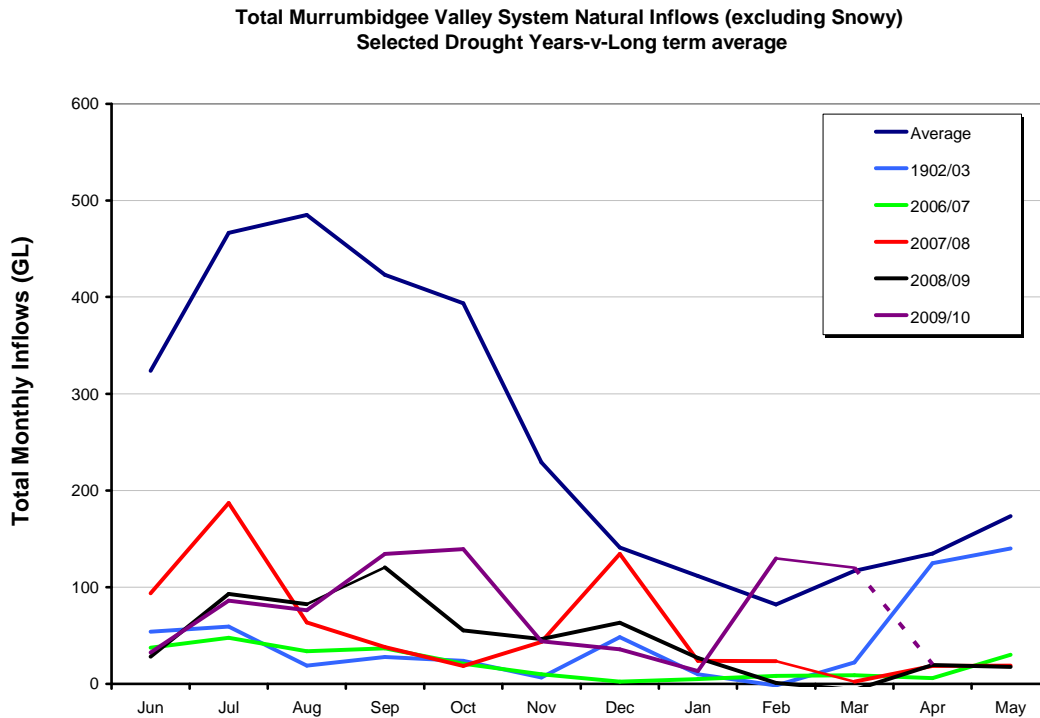
Rainfall over the past four weeks

Location	From 12 – 31 March (mm)	From 1-12 April (mm)	Total (mm)	Long term April average (mm)	% of April average
Thredbo Village	20.9	58.5	79.4	110.5	72
Gundagai (Ridge St)	16.2	15.2	31.4	54.9	57
Griffith	2.6	5.4	8.0	27.9	29
Hay	1.8	14.1	15.9	28.1	57

The following table shows Murrumbidgee Valley storage levels as at 12 April 2010 and compares these volumes with those at this time last month and this time last year.

Storage @ 12 April 2010	Volume (GL)	% of capacity	Change in Volume from this time last month (GL)	Volume at this time last year (GL).	Change in volume from last year (GL).
Burrinjuck Dam	436	42	-32	410	+26
Blowering Dam	591	35	+47	479	+112
Total	1027			889	+138

Inflow graph



Outlook and water availability for 2010/11

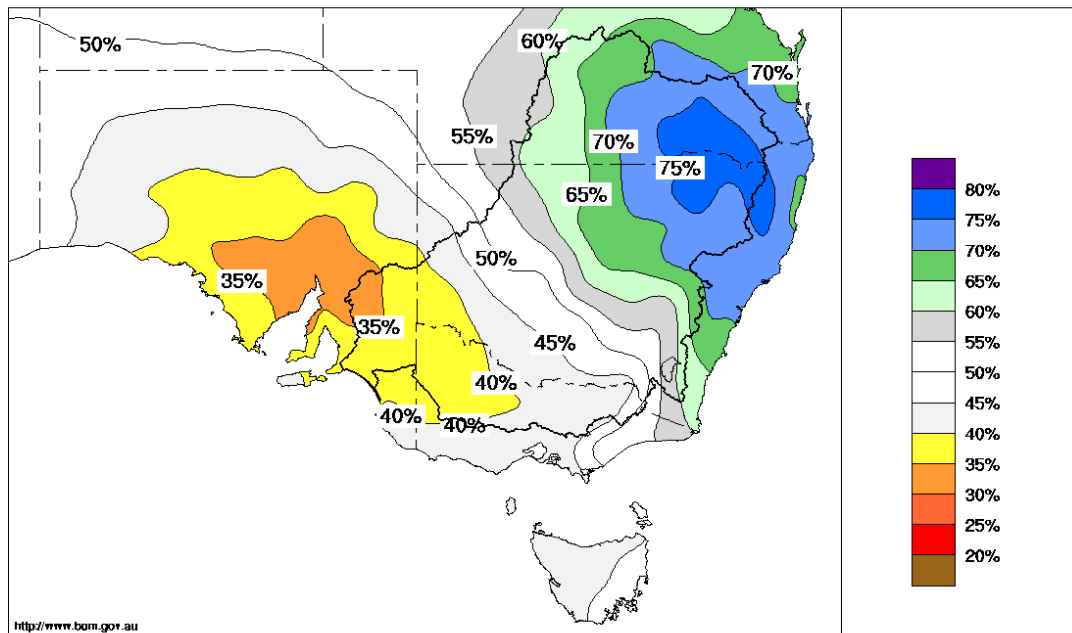
The Murrumbidgee Valley is in a better position than it was this time last year, with nearly 140 gigalitres (GL) more water in storage and less in undelivered inter-valley transfers. At this time last year there was 230 GL of undelivered inter-valley transfers, as opposed to approximately 60 GL this year.

A total of 270 GL of water was carried over from 2008/09 to 2009/10 in the Murrumbidgee Valley. Preliminary estimates of carryover for next year indicate that approximately 600 GL will be carried over into 2010/11.

Some 340 GL of water was available for high security; 510 GL for general security and 270 GL were available for conveyance licences in 2009/10.

The map on the next page shows the probability of getting greater than the median rain 'normal rain' to the end of June 2010. There is approximately a 50:50 chance of receiving about median rain in the higher rainfall areas of the catchment. Soil moisture for this time of year is about average throughout the catchment. Effectively, 'normal rain' should produce normal runoff.

Chance of exceeding the median Rainfall April to June 2010
 Product of the National Climate Centre



© Commonwealth of Australia 2010, Australian Bureau of Meteorology

Issued: 04/03/2010

Note: Median rain is the depth of rain that is exceeded in 50 per cent of years.

Under the current conditions it is unlikely that the water sharing plan will be recommenced in the immediate future.

Under the plan, there should be sufficient water to supply all urban, stock and domestic and high security supplies through the worst drought. Until there is 'guaranteed' supply of this water for two years, the water sharing plan should not be recommenced.

Practically, this means that until water availability in the Snowy Scheme recovers to the extent that it can supply full required annual release for two years with minimum inflows, the water sharing plan should not be recommenced. The probability of this occurring before 1 July is very low.

All critical human needs and carryover will be available on 1 July 2010. The table below shows the chances of allocations in 2010/11.

Allocation	Probability to achieve by 1 July 2010	Probability to achieve by 1 October 2010
50 % high security	1 chance in 2	19 chances in 20
95 % high security	1 chance in 10	4 chances in 5
5 % general security	1 chance in 50	6 chances in 10
25 % general security	negligible	1 chance in 2

Carryover

Until the water sharing plan is recommenced, 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 during that year.

Trade

There will be no further trade ballots this water year, and all trades will close 31 May 2010.

Intervalley trade from the Murrumbidgee to the Murray must be 'cleared' by a physical transfer from the Murrumbidgee to the Murray either by flow via Balranald, or to deliver Snowy water planned to be released to the Murrumbidgee instead be released to the Murray. The transfer of Snowy water requires the agreement of Snowy Hydro Ltd.

The current policy is to have no more than 100 GL of trade water planned to be released via Balranald at any time. It is likely that trade will be recommenced in July.

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.

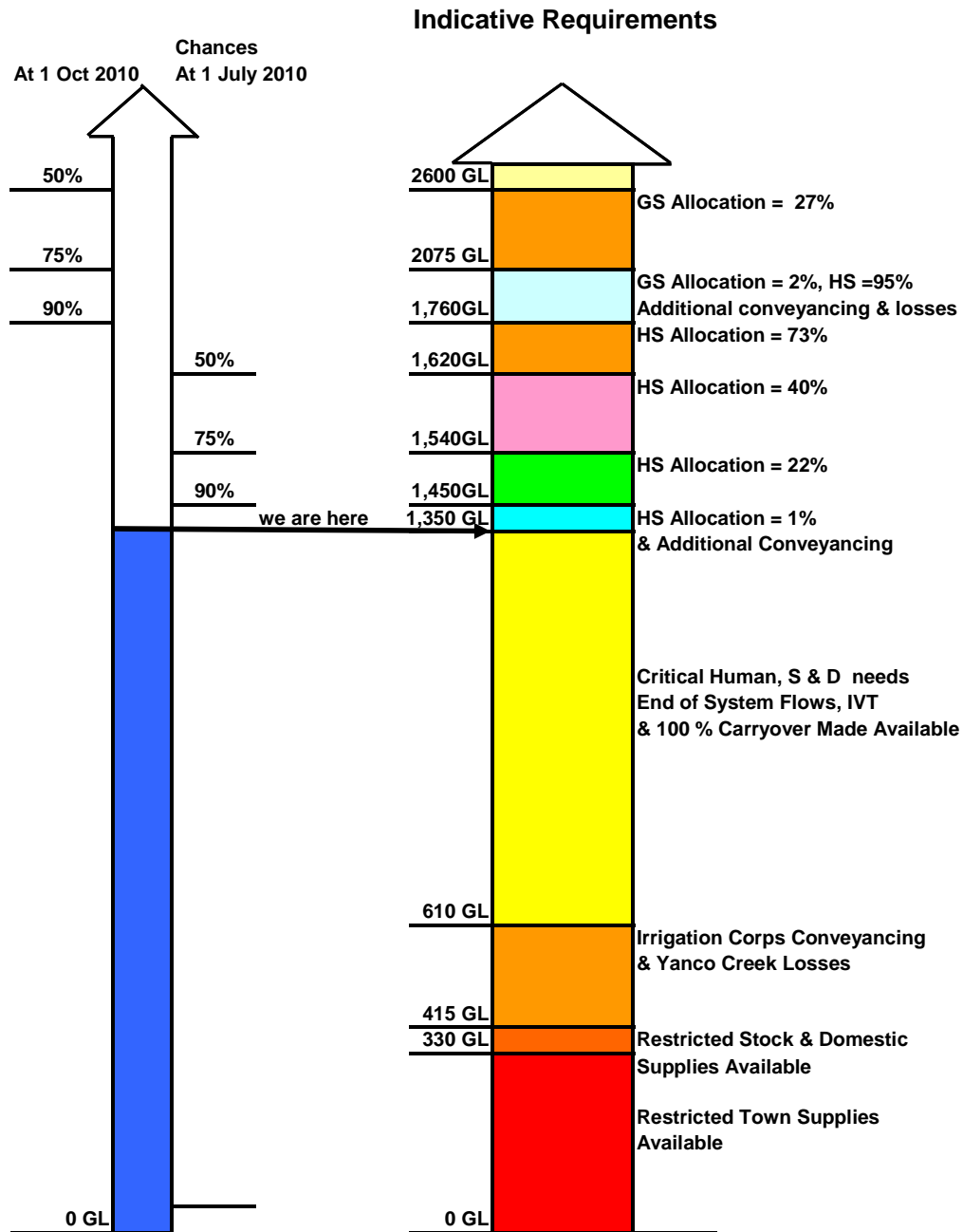
Discussions with the critical water advisory group will be commenced in the near future to provide input to the on-going sharing rules to ensure that water is made available for the environment, until the plan recommences.

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



Contact: Bunty Driver 03 5898 3910 mobile 0407 403 234

The NSW Office of Water is a separate office within the
Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water