

22 May 2019

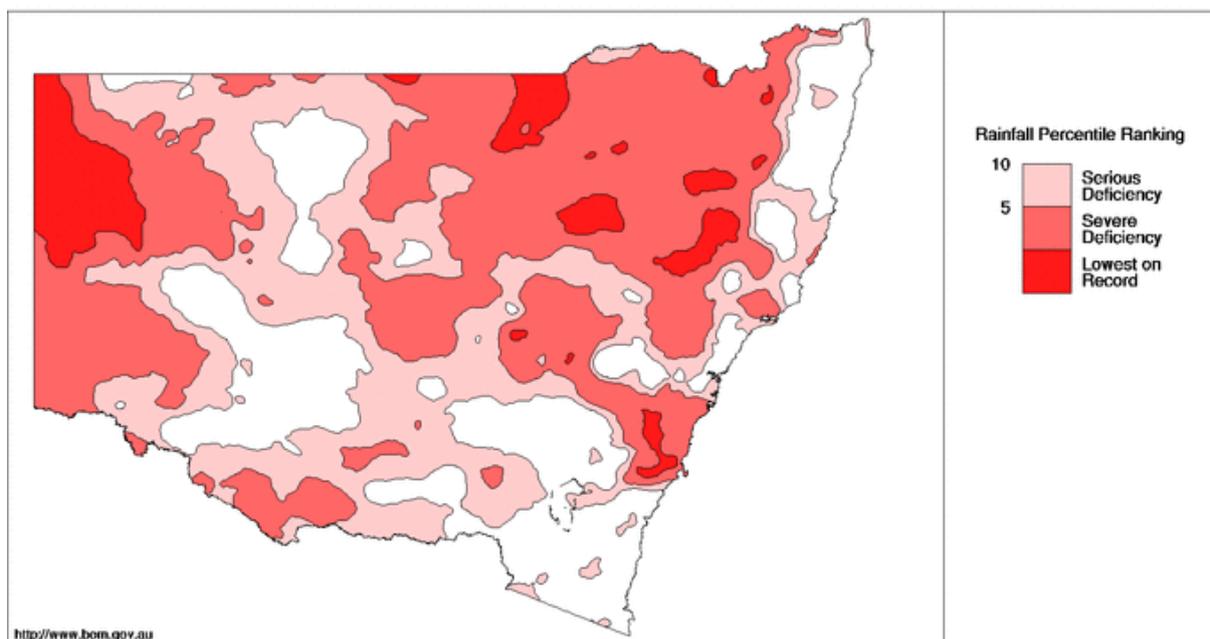
## NSW Groundwater

### Water allocation update

The extreme dry conditions across most of inland NSW appear set to continue. Surface water resources are dwindling and there is an increased dependence on groundwater sources. Resource management focus is on ensuring average annual pumping volumes are kept within the limits set in the water sharing plans.

New South Wales Rainfall Deficiencies 1 May 2017 to 30 April 2019

Distribution Based on Gridded Data  
Australian Bureau of Meteorology



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The NSW mapping of rainfall deficiency (above) shows that rainfall for the last two years across most of NSW has been in the lowest 10 per cent of years on record, with some areas amongst the lowest ever recorded. As a result of the lack of surface water flows there has been sustained high volumes of groundwater extracted over the last few years, particularly in the north of the state. The dry conditions have also resulted in limited recharge of groundwater systems.

Water sharing plans allow groundwater to be temporarily pumped for some years at higher volumes than the annual limit. This provides some operational flexibility around seasonal variation in conditions, for example droughts. However, the plans also set limits on the period that this higher level of extraction can continue. Once the compliance trigger is reached groundwater allocations are required to be reduced until the extraction is back within limits. This helps to prevent resource depletion.

## Water allocation outlook

The 1 July water allocations are currently being calculated. For two water sources the plan's compliance trigger has already been reached and will require a reduction in allocations. Reduced allocations for Aquifer Access entitlements may also be expected in some other groundwater sources (Table1).

WaterNSW is prioritising the processing of meter data for groundwater systems that have extraction levels approaching their plan's compliance trigger.

Reduction in allocations action is required under water sharing plan rules when the average annual extraction exceeds the plan's compliance trigger. Reduced allocations are intended to return extraction to within long term sustainable limits.

Groundwater entitlements in alluvial systems where allocation depends on the surface water allocation can expect a reduced allocation on 1 July, if the surface water allocation is reduced.

**Table 1 Groundwater sources that could expect reduced allocations on 1 July 2019.**

Compliance	Groundwater source
Compliance trigger exceeded, reduced allocations expected	Great Artesian Basin Eastern Recharge
	Upper Namoi Zone 8, Mooki Valley (Quirindi-Pine Ridge Road to Breeza)
Close to compliance trigger, reduction in allocations dependent on final metering data	Upper Namoi Zone 5, Namoi Valley (Gin's Leap to Narrabri)
	Upper Namoi Zone 2, Cox's Creek (Mullaley to Boggabri)
	Lower Lachlan
	Lower Murrumbidgee Deep
Historic pumping indicates potential to breach compliance trigger, reduction in allocations dependent on final metering data	Lower Gwydir
	Upper Namoi Zone 4, Namoi Valley (Keepit Dam to Gin's Leap)
	Upper Namoi Zone 3, Mooki Valley (Breeza to Gunnedah)
	Lower Namoi
	Cudgegong Alluvial
	Upper Macquarie Alluvial

Not all groundwater meter readings can be finalised prior to the 1 July 2019 announcement, therefore some projections of annual water usage to 30 June will be necessary.

Projections will be checked using actual data as it comes to hand and where a reduction has been imposed, but an increase in the allocation is possible while remaining compliant with the water sharing plan, a further allocation will be made in early October 2019.

All other water groundwater sources can expect their usual allocation for entitlements on 1 July for the water year 2019-20.

The calculations are based on the volumes pumped in the current and previous years to determine the average annual extraction over the compliance period. The plans set a compliance period of either five or three years. They also have varying exceedance levels, typically 5 per cent or 10 per cent above the extraction limit.

Those groundwater sources that have higher exceedance levels and/or longer periods over which the average extraction is calculated, could require longer periods of reduced allocation to return to the water source to sustainable levels of extraction.

## **Further information**

Information on available water determinations and water sharing plans is available on the Department of Industry website - [www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water](http://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water)

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