

Report card for the Macdonald River Water Source

Report card 35 of 64

Water source context

Water Sharing Plan:	Greater Metropolitan Region Unregulated River Water Sources
Extraction Management Unit:	Hawkesbury and Lower Nepean Rivers
Area:	227,361.3 ha
Inflowing water source:	Nil
Receiving water source:	Lower Hawkesbury River Water Source

River flows

Low-flow index:	1 ML/day (80 th percentile flow)
Flow records:	MacDonald River at St Albans gauge (212228)

Basic landholder rights

Domestic and stock rights estimate:	821.3 ML/yr
Native title rights:	0 ML/yr

Licensed water entitlements

Total surface water entitlement:	299 ML/yr (8 ML/yr domestic and stock licences, 291 ML/yr unregulated access licences)
Local water utilities entitlement:	0 ML/yr
Major utilities entitlement:	0 ML/yr
Proportion of extraction management unit:	<1%

Rules

Managing access licences

Each water access licence has its own share component (volume of the licence) and a water allocation account that acts like a bank account where water is credited or debited.

- Water is credited to an account by an available water determination or if water is traded in (purchased) during the year from other licence holders
- Water is debited from the account when water is extracted or traded out (sold). Total extraction from a work (pump, bore, etc.) will be measured via metering or logbooks.

Carryover and individual account limits

For a major water utility access licence account – carryover is not permitted.

Domestic and stock, unregulated river and aquifer access licence accounts - carryover is permitted up to 1 ML per unit share or 100% of share component (where expressed in ML) at the end of each water year.

Domestic and stock, unregulated river and aquifer access licences - the maximum water account debit in any 3 consecutive water years is the volume of water allocated to the account over those 3 years from available water determinations plus any adjustments made for allocation assignments (trades) or water allocation re-credited into the account.

Table 1. Draft rules for granting access licences

Type	Current rules	Proposed rules
There are limited purposes for which a new licence will be granted. It is anticipated that most water needs will be sourced from the market. One reason a licence may be granted is for Aboriginal cultural purposes. Other reasons are identified in Clause 10 of the Water Management Act General Regulation 2018.		
Aboriginal cultural access licence	Permitted to a limit of 10 ML/yr.	No change.
Aboriginal community development access licence	Permitted, to a total combined limit of 192 ML/yr	Prohibited.

Table 2. Draft surface water access rules

Type	Current rules	Proposed rules
River flow can be viewed on WaterNSW Real-time Data website . Search for a gauge under Rivers and Streams.		
Cease to pump	Cease to pump when no visible flow at the pump site. Cease to pump when flows are in the very low flow class.	No change.

Type	Current rules	Proposed rules
	No take 24 hours after a cease to pump event.	
Flow classes	Very low flow class: ≤ 1 ML/day A class: >1 ML/day - ≤ 16 ML/day B class: >16 ML/day	No change.
Extraction from an in-river pool	Must cease pumping if the in-river pool is below full capacity	No change.
Extraction from an authorised in-river dam pool	Rules specified on the water supply work approval for the in-river dam.	No change
Off-river pools (natural pools, lakes or lagoons)	Extraction from natural pools can only occur if the pool is 100% full.	No change.

Table 3 Exemptions from surface water access rules

Type	Current rules	Proposed rules
Health and hygiene	For an access licence specified in Schedule 2 of the plan, no more than 20 kl/day for the following reasons: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fruit washing • cleaning of dairy plant and equipment for the purposes of hygiene • poultry watering and misting • cleaning of enclosures used for intensive animal production for the purposes of hygiene. 	Exemption now applies to both fruit and vegetable washing.
Domestic use	For domestic consumption under a domestic and stock access licence, up to 1 kl/day.	No change.
Harvestable rights	From a run-off harvesting dam.	No change.
Specific purpose	For an access licence specified in Schedule 2 of the plan.	No change.

Table 4 Draft rules for constructing surface water supply works

Type	Current rules	Proposed rules
In-river dams	Permitted.	Prohibited in third order or larger streams
Works near coastal wetlands listed under <i>State Environmental Planning Policy (Resilience and Hazards) 2021</i>	No current rule.	Prohibited within 3km upstream of a Ramsar wetland or 200m of a coastal wetland identified on the Coastal Wetlands and Littoral Rainforest Area Map available on the NSW Planning Portal at www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au .

Table 5 Draft water trading (dealing) rules

Type	Current rules	Proposed rules
Trading covers conversion of access licence to a new category (for example from unregulated river to aquifer), assignment of rights dealings (trading of a licence), share component dealings between water sources (trading of entitlement between water sources), water allocation dealings (trading an annual allocation) and water supply works dealings (relocation of an extraction point).		
INTO water source	Permitted, no net gain.	Prohibited
WITHIN water source	Permitted except to a work taking from a lagoon.	No change
Surface water to groundwater	Prohibited	No change
Groundwater to surface water	Prohibited	No change
Convert to high flow	Permitted to a total combined limit of 392 unit shares.	Prohibited

Key factors for decisions

- The Macdonald River Water Source has very high (ecological values and medium likelihood of extraction from low flows impacting the ecological values, with an overall high risk to low flows
- No change is proposed to the current access rules as the level of overall risk (high) has not changed since the commencement of the first plan
- High flows in this water source are less than 20 ML/yr. This volume is not large enough to sustain high flow extraction. As such it is proposed that high flow conversions and the granting of Aboriginal Community Development Licences (which take from high flows) are no longer allowed.

- In-river dams will be prohibited on third order and higher streams due to the very high ecological values of this water source.
- The current water sharing plan allows trade into the Macdonald River Water Source as long as there is no net gain of entitlement. It is proposed to further restrict trade due to the very high ecological values in this water source. Trade out of the Macdonald River Water Source is allowed and should help reduce the overall risk.

Public exhibition

The Department of Planning and Environment seeks feedback from the public on the suitability of the proposed rules for this water source.

The draft Greater Metropolitan Region Unregulated River Water Sharing Plan and supporting fact sheets are available from the department's [Public Exhibition website](#).