

11 March 2020

Macquarie and Cudgegong Regulated Rivers Water Source

Water allocation update

Allocations for the Macquarie-Cudgegong Regulated Rivers Water Source **remain unchanged**.

The system continues to experience its worst ever drought and resources continue to be managed to ensure the delivery of critical needs as a priority. Rainfall in the Macquarie-Cudgegong catchment in February and the first half of March ranged from 50mm to 150mm. While the minor inflows to Burrendong Dam and downstream tributary response is welcome, more intense and sustained rainfall is required to reverse drought impacts and enable the lifting of water restrictions.

Recent rainfall has produced about 35 gigalitres (GL) of inflows into Burrendong Dam and over 70 GL of tributary flows below the dam to the end of February. While the first week in March has produced another 25 GL into Burrendong Dam and 25 GL in downstream tributaries. There has been no improvement in Windamere storage. The total inflow into Burrendong Dam since the last general security allocation in August 2017 (31 months ago) has been 131,000 megalitres (ML). This is only a quarter of the previous record low inflow for the 31 months ending in February.

2019-20	High Security	General Security	Drought Stage
Cudgegong	70%	0%	 Stage 2
Macquarie	70%	0%	 Stage 4

A temporary water restriction remains in place below Burrendong Dam to limit water usage and protect critical supplies. Access to remaining water in general security carryover sub-accounts, including remaining EWA, has been restricted since 1 July 2019 until conditions improve.

Cudgegong Regulated River access licences, including general security carryover, are not restricted, however; no trading of water from above to below Burrendong Dam is permitted due to the critical water shortage downstream. Restrictions can only be eased when sufficient inflows to assure high priority needs for the 2020-21 water year are captured in storage. In the meantime water users are advised to remain vigilant and maximise their water use efficiency.

Welcome rainfall in downstream catchments in February and the first half of March produced about 95,000 ML of tributary flows below Burrendong Dam. Tributary flows surplus to water orders have been managed under the Tributary Flow Management Plan, while also meeting the critical needs of the environment in some sections of the river. Temporary drought works at Warren Weir, Gunningbar Weir and Duck Creek offtake have been removed to deliver much needed stock and domestic supplies and replenish river pools. The recent rainfall and resultant inflow has also allowed deferral of the commencement of the planned Buk Water Transfer to September 2020.

Despite some relief, businesses and landholders affected by the limited regulated river operations needed to deal with severe water shortages should continue with their water saving arrangements until normal regulated river operations can resume. Works continue to be readied to access inactive storage in Burrendong Dam should that become necessary, and additional drought contingency measures may also be needed to ensure critical needs and town supplies can be met.

Storage levels (as at 10 March 2020)

- Burrendong Dam is 6.5 per cent full – rising – holding about 109,200 ML (75,200 ML active)
- Windamere Dam is 26.2 per cent full – falling – holding about 97,400 ML.

Drought stage

The NSW Extreme Events Policy introduced a staged approach to managing extreme events, such as severe droughts or poor water quality events. The Macquarie Regulated River Water Source continues to experience a critical Stage 4 drought event. Contingency measures are being implemented to protect and extend critical water supplies for as long as possible.

The Cudgegong Regulated River Water Source advanced to Stage 2 on 1 July 2019, reflecting the restricted trade dealings and the reduced (70%) high security allocation.

For further details on current drought status please see detailed drought response advice available here: <https://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/droughts-floods/drought-update/critical-valleys-in-drought>

Key facts

- If conditions remain dry, a further bulk water transfer will commence in September 2020, leaving a minimum of 70 GL in Windamere Dam upon completion. This is enough to secure supply for local regulated Cudgegong demands for a number of years.
- Despite some water in accounts, there will be no delivery of water to some sections of the regulated Macquarie River, unless assisted by rainfall events and unregulated tributary inflows. Water users should refer to WaterNSW for specific local delivery advice.
- Tributary flows from passing storms downstream of Burrendong Dam will be managed adaptively to meet high priority commitments, including effluent replenishments where possible.

Climatic outlook

The Bureau of Meteorology seasonal outlook for April to June 2020 indicates slightly higher likelihood of wetter than average conditions in the catchment. Both daytime and overnight temperatures are likely and very likely to be above average (respectively) across the catchment.

With major climate drivers and short-term climate drivers neutral, widespread above or below average seasonal rainfall is less likely across the nation.

Details can be found in: www.bom.gov.au/climate/ahead/outlooks/

Next announcement

The next water allocation statement for the Macquarie-Cudgegong Regulated Rivers Water Source will be on **Thursday 9 April 2020**.

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