

Operating rule changes for weirs 8 and 9

The operating rule changes for weirs 8 and 9 is one of three main components of the sustainable diversion limit (SDL) offsets in the Lower Murray project. The package of works aims to restore and enhance river habitat in the Lower Murray region of New South Wales (NSW).

Locks 8 and 9 weir pool manipulation

The proposed weir pool manipulation is an operating rule change. We will confirm an amended protocol for weir pool management. The amended protocol assumes that variations in weir pool height within and between seasons will increase.

The amended rules would establish agreed triggers and scenarios that would specify when weir pools are raised or lowered. This will give us greater flexibility to meet the water requirements of neighbouring ecosystems.

The Department of Planning, Industry and Environment expects to achieve positive environmental outcomes by:

- promoting fish growth and breeding
- promoting increased habitat use
- improving water quality
- reducing water lost through evaporation in summer.

As part of this project, we will relocate and replace the Lower Murray Water Millewa pump station at Lake Cullulleraine (in Victoria). We will complete other minor works. This will include constructing several low-level banks and crossings to better manage small areas of inundation near Lock 9.

Project benefits

The rise and fall of river levels is an important factor in the health of the Murray River and its floodplain. The project will allow us to restore components of the riverine ecosystem by providing intermittent inundation and exposure of wetlands, aquatic plant beds and floodplain vegetation.

The key components of this restoration include:

- increasing the availability of nutrients and energy in the food web through greater plant productivity, mineralisation of organic matter and bacteria-dominated bio films
- increased extent, diversity and productivity of emergent aquatic vegetation
- increased diversity and productivity of floodplain vegetation
- increased opportunities for birds, fish, frogs and other aquatic animals to feed, breed and shelter from predators.