

1 July 2022

Opening water allocations 2022/23 – NSW Unregulated River Water Sources

Water availability and allocation update

The NSW Department of Planning and Environment today announced opening water allocations for unregulated river water users for the 2022/23 water year.

There are no surprises in the allocations to unregulated river water users, with all categories receiving their full allocation for the 2022/23 water year.

- Major utility access licence holders covered by all unregulated river water sharing plans have received an allocation of 100% of entitlement or 1 megalitre per unit share.
- Local water utility access licence holders covered by all unregulated river water sharing plans have received an allocation of 100% of entitlement or 1 megalitre per unit share.
- Domestic and stock water access licence holders covered by unregulated river water sharing plans have received an allocation of 100% of entitlement or 1 megalitre per unit share.
- Unregulated River and Unregulated River (special additional high flow) water access licence holders covered by all unregulated river water sharing plans have received an allocation of 100% of entitlement or 1 megalitre per unit share.

Unregulated river water users can only divert water when flow thresholds in the river are met. Higher priority licences can access flows for longer, down to a lower level. However, low river flows in unregulated river systems are protected by cease-to-pump conditions attached to water licences.

The last water year (2021/22) was characterised by continued drought-breaking to flood-making rainfall, particularly in eastern NSW, with some coastal catchments experiencing record flood events in March 2022. There has been considerable improvement in conditions, particularly in soil moisture recovery. The opening months of the new water year are forecast to deliver above average rainfall for most of NSW.

For unregulated river systems, the taking of water is opportunistic. Access to water is prioritised by river level – the highest priority purposes are allowed to continue access at lower river flows. All water accounts are generally fully allocated on 1 July and water is diverted and used when it is needed and available - subject to river flows. Only in rare circumstances are allocations reduced or water restrictions imposed in unregulated systems.

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