

12 November 2019

Macquarie and Cudgegong Valleys

Water allocation update

Allocations for the Macquarie-Cudgegong regulated river water sources **remain unchanged**.

The system continues to experience its worst ever drought and resources are being managed to extend remaining supplies for critical needs.

There was 971 megalitres (ML) of inflow to Burrendong Dam during October 2019 and the total since the last general security allocation in August 2017 has been just 94,300 ML.

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 from 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. With dry conditions continuing, water users are advised to plan their programs accordingly and to maximise water use efficiency.

Operational drought contingency measures are now effective and aim to extend critical water supplies. Temporary works to raise Warren Weir are complete and deliveries downstream have ceased. Similarly, regulated releases into Duck Creek and Crooked Creek have also ceased. Releases beyond Gunningbar Weir will cease by summer (1 December 2019). For affected landholders downstream of Gunningbar Weir the only access to flows will be from local storms and naturally occurring (unregulated) flows, until the regulated river system recovers.

Businesses and landholders affected by these operational changes should be making alternative arrangements until regulated river operations can resume. Investigative works are being conducted to access inactive storage in Burrendong Dam. Additional drought contingency measures are being considered and may be needed to ensure town supplies and other critical needs can be met.

Storage levels (as at 11 November 2019)

- Burrendong is 3.6 per cent full – falling – currently holding 75,000 ML (41,000 ML active)
- Windamere is 30 per cent full – falling – currently holding 111,000 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. Timely contingency measures will be introduced to protect and extend critical water supplies for as long as possible.

The Cudgegong regulated 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: www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/droughts-floods/drought-update.

Key facts

- Despite some water in accounts, there will be no delivery of water to some sections of the regulated Macquarie River, unless assisted by storms and unregulated tributary inflows. Water users should refer to WaterNSW for specific local delivery advice.
- In the absence of significant inflow, cease-to-flow conditions are likely to persist in the Macquarie River below Warren, and for Duck and Crooked creeks. Regulated flows will also cease beyond Gunningbar Weir after November 2019.
- Trade between the Cudgegong and Macquarie valleys is closed due to critical water shortages.
- If conditions remain dry, a further bulk water transfer will commence in January 2020 leaving a minimum of 70 gigalitres (GL) in Windamere Dam. This is enough to secure supply for local demand in the regulated Cudgegong Valley for a number of years.
- Tributary flows downstream of Burrendong Dam will be managed adaptively to meet high priority commitments. Tributary flows, should they become available from passing storms, will be used to assist deliveries in regulated river sections, particularly for critical needs.

Climatic outlook

The Bureau of Meteorology seasonal outlook for November 2019 to January 2020 indicates that the Macquarie catchment is likely to experience drier than average conditions across the catchment. Daytime temperatures over this period are very likely to be above average.

The Bureau indicates that the El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) will remain neutral until early 2020. Positive Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) conditions are forecast for the remainder of spring and early summer. A positive IOD will likely result in below average rainfall and above average temperatures.

For further details: www.bom.gov.au/climate/outlooks/#/overview/summary

Next announcement

The next water allocation statement for the regulated Macquarie-Cudgegong valleys will be on **Wednesday 11 December 2019**.

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