

1 July 2021

Opening water allocations 2021-22

Unregulated River water users

The NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment today announced opening water allocations for unregulated river entitlement holders for the 2021-22 water year.

Last year (2020-21) was characterised by drought-breaking rainfall, particularly in eastern NSW, combined with high temperatures. On-going drought conditions during the first half of the water year were finally broken from January 2021, with some coastal catchments experiencing record flooding in March.

There has been considerable improvement in conditions this calendar year, particularly in soil moisture recovery, boosting dry land cropping for the winter period. Most, if not all streams that had ceased flowing during the drought have now recovered, providing welcome access to surface water where licence conditions are met. The opening months of the new water year are forecast to deliver above average rainfall for most of NSW.

In January, as the system began to recover from drought, the resumption of flow rule limited access to water by users along the Barwon-Darling unregulated river because the Wilcannia flow rate had been low for at least 90 days. However, by February and March as conditions continued to improve, access was allowed to resume once good flow connectivity had been established including to Wilcannia and Menindee.

There are no surprises in the allocations to unregulated river water users with all categories receiving their full allocation.

- 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.

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