

Relationship between the water resource plan and water sharing plan

Water resource plans are being developed to meet the requirements of Chapter 10 of the Basin Plan 2012, made under the Commonwealth Water Act 2007.

Water sharing plans are made under the NSW *Water Management Act 2000* (WM Act). They are, and will continue to be, the primary tool to define water-sharing arrangements in NSW. Water sharing plans are therefore a central component of each water resource plan, and have been amended to meet Basin Plan requirements where necessary.

This factsheet explains differences between the existing and the new groundwater water sharing plans for the MDB Porous Rock. These changes are the result of aligning the groundwater water sharing plan with the *MDB Porous Rock Water Resource Plan*, and include changes to the management area and how extraction limits are set.

You may also want to read the factsheet for proposed changes to the MDB Porous Rock groundwater sharing plan.

Groundwater management areas

The current water sharing plan for the Murray-Darling Basin Porous Rock groundwater source expires on 1 July 2021. It is being replaced and revised as part of the water resource planning process. The new plan will be called the *Water Sharing Plan for the Murray Darling Basin Porous Rock Groundwater Sources 2020*, and will align with the boundaries set for the MDB Porous Rock water resource plan area under the *Basin Plan 2012* ('the Basin Plan'). That means the new water sharing plan will manage new areas, and include provisions for these areas.

The extraction limits established in the Basin Plan 2012, known as 'sustainable diversion limits' are different to the long term average annual extraction limits in the current *Water Sharing Plan for the Murray-Darling Basin Porous Rock 2011*. The long term average annual extraction limits in the remade water sharing plan will be aligned with the sustainable diversion limits established in the Basin Plan 2012.

The new water sharing plan will then include four of the 'sustainable diversion limit resource units' specified in the *Basin Plan 2012*:

- the Gunnedah – Oxley Basin
- the Oaklands Basin
- the Sydney Basin MDB
- the Western Porous Rock

Extraction Limits

The Basin Plan sets extraction limits, known as 'sustainable diversion limits', for each of the sustainable diversion limit resource units.

The relationships between the Basin Plan sustainable diversion limits and the long term annual extraction limits in the draft *Water Sharing Plan for the Murray-Darling Basin Porous Rock Groundwater Sources 2020* are shown in Table 1. To achieve the sustainable diversion limits we propose to decrease the long term annual extraction limit in the in the Gunnedah-Oxley Basin, Sydney Basin and Western Porous Rock groundwater sources. There will be no material impact on users from this change as the sum of the current licence and entitlement volumes is less than the new long term annual extraction limits.

Table 1. Murray-Darling Basin Porous Rock—relationship between the water resource plan and water sharing plan

Specified in Schedule 4 of the Basin Plan		Specified in Part 6 of the <i>Water Sharing Plan for the Murray Darling Basin Porous Rock Groundwater Sources 2020</i>	
Sustainable diversion limit resource unit	Sustainable diversion limit	Groundwater source	Long term annual average extraction limit
Gunnedah-Oxley Basin	127.5 GL/yr	Gunnedah-Oxley Basin MDB	127,500 ML/yr
Oaklands Basin	2.5 GL/yr	Oaklands Basin	2 500 ML/yr
Sydney Basin MDB	19.1 GL/yr	Sydney Basin MDB	19,100 ML/yr
Western Porous Rock	226.0 GL/yr	Western Murray Porous Rock	226,000 ML/yr

Differences in managing compliance with extraction limits

Groundwater extraction within the area of the new Murray-Darling Basin Porous Rock groundwater sharing plan will need to meet these four sustainable diversion limits. Compliance will be assessed by calculating the maximum volume of water permitted to be taken in a water year¹, known as ‘annual permitted take’, and comparing this to the volume actually taken in that year. The difference is then recorded on a ‘register of take’ as a debit or a credit.

Annual permitted take is calculated *retrospectively* at the end of a water year, after assessing the volume of water that was allowed to be extracted in that water year under the water resource plan rules. It does not directly determine how much water a licence holder can take in any water year, but is the benchmark against which total annual consumptive use from a resource unit will be compared.

The comparison is solely to assess compliance with the longer term sustainable diversion limit over time. At the end of each water year, actual take will be compared with the annual permitted take (or sustainable diversion limit) for each SDL resource unit. If actual take exceeds the annual permitted take a debit will be recorded, and conversely, if actual take is less than the annual permitted take, a credit will be recorded. Until 2028, non-compliance with a sustainable diversion limit is defined as when the cumulative balance is in debit by an amount that is equal to 20% (or more) of the sustainable diversion limits for that sustainable diversion limit resource unit.

For all groundwater sources in the Murray-Darling Basin Porous Rock plan area, the annual permitted take for each is equal to the sustainable diversion limit, which in turn is equal to the long-term average annual extraction limits for those groundwater sources (Table 1).

¹ A water year is a 12 month period commencing 1 July.

Water sharing plans also require extractions to comply with the long-term average annual extraction limits for each groundwater source. The plans specify that compliance is assessed by comparing the long-term average annual extraction limit to the average annual volume of water extracted over the preceding five years.

Non-compliance with the long-term average annual extraction limit for a groundwater source occurs when the calculated average annual extraction exceeds the long-term average annual extraction limit for that source by 5%.

If either of these two assessment processes shows a breach of a sustainable diversion limit or a long-term average annual extraction limit, future extraction from the groundwater source will be restricted. This can be by one or both of the following methods:

- announcing available water determinations of less than 100% (or 1 ML/unit share) for lower priority access licences in the following year.
- restricting the water allocations that can be taken, assigned under section 71T of the Water Management Act 2000, or otherwise debited or withdrawn, from a water allocation account in the following water year.

Extraction restrictions will be what is necessary to return average annual extractions in the groundwater source to the long-term average annual extraction limit specified in the water sharing plan for the groundwater source, or to meet the requirements of Division 3 of Part 4 of Chapter 6 of the Basin Plan.

More information

The draft MDB Porous Rock Water Resource Plan and other fact sheets are available from, www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water:

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