

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 NSW Border Rivers Alluvium. These changes are the result of aligning the groundwater water sharing plan with the *NSW Border Rivers Alluvium 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 NSW Border Rivers Alluvial groundwater sharing plan.

Groundwater management areas

The current water sharing plan for the NSW Border Rivers groundwater sources 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 NSW Border Rivers Alluvial Groundwater Sources 2020*, and will align with the boundaries set for the NSW Border Rivers Alluvium water resource plan area under the *Basin Plan 2012* ('the Basin Plan'). That means that the new water sharing plan will manage new areas, and include provisions for these.

We propose that this plan will replace the *Water Sharing Plan for the NSW Border Rivers Unregulated and Alluvial Water Sources 2012* in relation to the Macintyre, NSW Border Rivers Downstream Keetah Bridge, NSW Border Rivers Upstream Keetah Bridge and Ottleys Creek Alluvial Groundwater Sources.

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

- the NSW Border Rivers Alluvium
- the NSW Border Rivers Tributary Alluvium.

Extraction Limits

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

The relationship between the *Basin Plan 2012* sustainable diversion limits and the long-term average annual extraction limits in the draft *Water Sharing Plan for the NSW Border Rivers Alluvial Groundwater Sources 2020* are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. NSW Border Rivers Alluvium Alluvium—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 NSW Border Rivers Alluvial Groundwater Sources 2020</i>	
Sustainable diversion limit resource unit	Sustainable diversion limit	Groundwater Source	Long term average annual extraction limit
NSW Border Rivers Alluvium (GS32)	8.40 GL/yr	NSW Border Rivers Upstream Keetah Bridge	8,085 ML/yr
		NSW Border Rivers Downstream Keetah Bridge	316 ML/yr
NSW Border Rivers Tributary Alluvium (GS33)	0.41 GL/yr	Macintyre Alluvial	373 ML/yr
		Ottleys Creek	30 ML/yr

Differences in managing compliance with extraction limits

Groundwater extraction within the area of the new NSW Border Rivers alluvial water sharing plan will need to meet these two 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 sustainable diversion limit over time.

At the end of each water year, actual take will be compared with the annual permitted take or suitable diversion limit for each sustainable diversion limit 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.

The annual permitted take for the NSW Border Rivers Downstream Keetah Bridge and NSW Border Rivers Upstream Keetah Bridge will be equivalent to the NSW Border Rivers sustainable diversion limit. The annual permitted take for the Ottleys Creek and Macintyre Alluvial Groundwater Sources will be equivalent to the sustainable diversion limit for the NSW Border Rivers Tributary Alluvium .

Water sharing plans also require management to 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 occurs when this calculated average annual extraction exceeds the long-term average annual extraction limit by 10% for the Macintyre, NSW Border Rivers Downstream Keetah Bridge, NSW Border Rivers Upstream Keetah Bridge and Ottleys Creek Alluvial Groundwater Sources.

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

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 Act) or otherwise debited or withdrawn, from a water allocation account in the following water year.

Extraction restrictions will be as 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 NSW Border Rivers Alluvium Water Resource Plan and other fact sheets are available from www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water

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